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IDLEHURST

A JOURNAL KEPT IN THE COUNTRY

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A JOURNAL KEPT IN THE COUNTRY

BY

JOHN HALSHAM

"Haec tibi dictabam post fanum putre Vacunae"

LONDON

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IDLEHURST:

A JOURNAL KEPT IN THE COUNTRY.

INTRODUCTORY.

MY DEAR PATERSON

That old question of ours, whether the world were larger to him who travelled far and wide, or to him who sat at home dreaming of the unknown lands, seems no nearer settlement after half a life of experiment than when it was first propounded in Blue Boar Lane sittings, or walks to Wheatley. Fixed here in the Sussex Weald, seldom moving out of the circle of the hills, often keeping within the village bounds for months together, I still maintain my unvisited world to be greater than all the seas and isles which you have profaned.

You will remember that when you had spent some ten years in Borneo, and it seemed probable that you

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would end your days there, you so far failed from your old vagrant principles (or was it that the old country had now become the stranger land?) as to look back to England, and to ask me for some account of our country life at home. You were pleased with the idea of a little chronicle of our Arnington days which I proposed to make you, as the readiest way I could find of presenting our country and people. Before my summer's journal is well ended, here you are in England again! But since you are tied in London, where a man is merged and lost, for sure, as wholly as he can be in Sarawak—in London that seems farther from Arnington quietude than your eastern isles—I think you may still entertain my compilation. It may serve in some measure to bring before you in Hampstead the life of the Weald—a life, I am afraid, that is undistinguished, commonplace enough; and yet the length between that and the pattern-moulded world you look down upon from the Heath! Being so little a traveller, I owe my knowledge of considerable portions of rural England to modern novels; and I learn from this source that Titanic passions, salient immorality, and an unintelligible dialect distinguish, singly or in combination, the peasantry of various parts of the British Isles with which I happen to be

unacquainted. In Sussex we do not possess these *differentiæ*. An odd transitional state between the old rural economy and a pervading plutocracy has apparently produced a rather respectable and soulless population, protected in its morals by a singular *vis inertiae*, and speaking almost universally that dreadful New English which flows from Thames about the world.

Under the attrition of London on the one side and Brighton on the other, we are taking upon us a general polish, and losing all individual character. With hardly an exception, the old great families of the county are extinct and their houses have passed into the hands of the bankers, the stockbrokers, the distillers. The names which abide are the common people's—the Bottings and Tomsetts that fill our registers of 1557. There live in Arnington to-day three generations of Thomas Pococks; and a Thomas Pocok appears in the roll of the Sussex archers who were at Agincourt. But beyond the names, little abides. Uniformity of school-methods is wearing down any small excrescences of individual character; the very forces of heredity seem powerless beneath the flattening weight of the Standards. Almost every recent legislative change has helped to obliterate the ancient distinctions; with a certain class of our village politicians the effacing of the old

inscriptions seems almost a religion. Whatsoever the merits of the emerging Cosmos may be, monotony of the most tyrannous kind must follow the present course of development.

Under these conditions of change the chief interest lies in watching the collision between old and new ; in finding survivals and tracing links with a far off past ; in the refreshing worth and salt of the passing generation, which after a few more winters will be wholly gone. There are differences of standpoint between aged labourers in Arnington and their grandsons, greater perhaps than the same interval of generation could show in any part of the world's history. The railroad embankments, as Thackeray says, have shut off the old world that was behind them. The rare survivors of the pre-railroad age, are almost as strange to us as a revived Jacobite or Fifth-Monarchy man could be among us to-day. And the interest of transition belongs, alas ! to the scene as well as to the characters.

Our Sussex landscape is naturally most beautiful ; a landscape of wide horizons and splendid distances, a mingling of heathy hills and valley meadows, woodland and tillage, that can compare with any champaign beneath the sun. But it is being steadily and in great part irrevocably defiled. Places of

wider fame, richer in historic interest are, to some extent, guarded by a special public opinion, or what passes for it ; but our incomparable Arcadia must be destroyed without a word of protest. The constant sap of brick and mortar, corrugated iron, and matchboarding advances ; speculative builders satisfy and foment the desire of the Cockney for a new red villa on a hill ; the villages year by year spread their fringe of abominable cottage and backyard ; the Government which looks after the art-instincts of our school children is engaged in blocking out some of the noblest of our landscapes with its black telephone-posts thirty feet high. All pleasure that is possible in watching Nature lies in survivals. The remnant is still amply sufficient to make us forget, in the more vivid moments, what is desecrated and lost ; but as year to year the mischief works, that " piteous lot " draws nearer " to flee from man, yet not rejoice in nature "—not of choice, but of miserable necessity.

With such aspects of the land and the people as these my journal deals : too little hopeful of the future perhaps ; inevitably puzzled by the present's marvellous tangle of good and ill ; tuned, no doubt, somewhat to that regretful regard of the past, which is so easy for the sliding forties. You will find

vignettes of the garden and the fields, sketches of the old people and the new, perspectives of our work and our play; my favourites presented, I hope, without excessive touches of rose-madder; my aversions etched without overmuch acid. You will not account impertinent a few private judgments here and there upon matters beyond our village horizon; dicta which are the product of the genuine Arcadian mind. Some one (Eduard Köhler, I think, in "Fantasiereisen") has an apologue of a Scythian tribe accustomed to turn out an anchorite into the desert for a term of years, and to receive on his return his strictures upon their manners and the constitution of their state with the consideration due to abstracted and unprejudiced criticism. Now I have been, for longer than I care to think, a rigid hermit in the wilderness; I am pure of the taint of Pall Mall; I am untouched by propagandist romances and the weightiest of reviews. You will allow these impressions of mine as the outcome of a seclusion at once fortunate and wilful; my fact and fancy both come out of that world you have barred yourself from, the *aprica rura* which I think still sometimes touch your heart, through the smoke cloud or the tropic sky, with the half-reproachful sweetness of first-love remembered after forty years.

THE JOURNAL.

February 25th.—Yesterday was so fair a day for February, that I left my gardening half-way through the morning, and went down to the village, taking a sort of small holiday I keep for such occasions. The forenoon was almost too beautiful for the season, bringing up something of an old schoolboy apprehension of make-weight unhappiness hard at hand. I had worked an hour or so on a south border, where the dry loam, knocked crumbling into the sunshine out of its November ridges, demanded the early pea and the ashleaf; but the periods of back-straightening, leaning on the hoe, and considering the blue breadths of distance, became more and more necessary; and at last I left the business three-parts done, and decided to walk down the hill to the village. I had an end of reason, if conscience brought up the unfinished border, inasmuch as I wanted to see the Rector in the matter of one Phineas Tomsett, a labourer living near me, whose eighty

rheumatic years are getting too strong for him, and threaten altogether to stop his shaky old hands at their superannuated hedging and ditching, and to send him to the Union for his little end of leisure.

All the way down the sandy road the south wind met me steadily in the face, a breath like April. The chaffinches trilled their ceaseless little roulade in every hedge-oak, a blackbird was singing in the copse at the Tanyard corner. The distance lay like a sea of hazy blue, the nearer wooded ridges standing like islands in the vaporous levels : everything persuaded to a quiet mind, conscious of winter behind one and life stirring before. But as I went, the thought of old Tomsett would now and again disperse the pleasant influences of the day. The old fellow has seen so many springs like this, so many high summers, so many nipping winters ; he has lived cleanly and honestly eighty years ; has raised and got so many quarters of corn, himself always within distance of absolute want, nearly starved in the old war-times. He has brought up sons ; two of them soldiers, dead in India, one vanished in Manitoba ; girls who married well or ill, died or drifted into London. He never poached ; he very rarely was drunk. Now, crooked with rheumatism, and utterly exhausted with long

labour, he earns short wages about Lycetts farm, turning out at half-past five in the morning in all weathers, until some small mischance—a cut finger “kind o’ pisoned-like,” or the thousand-and-first drenching, has brought him “on his club,” and he begins to see the end. A year or so will be eked out between the parish half-crown, and the parson’s “ticket;” and then, “he don’t care how soon he goes.” The long life of serviceableness to the country, closing so painfully, sets itself in my mind against a dozen sorts of prosperous nuisance; and the contrast takes the pleasure out of the day, even as an east wind will suck the light and colour out of wood and field.

The smell of wood fires and stabledom succeeds to the fresh earthy scent of the lane, as I come to the top of the street. Our village is one long road, crooked S-shaped, lined with cottages, some of which call themselves shops, with a show of oranges or boot-uppers on the window-sill, behind the little paled gardens. The Greyhound, a square three-storied relic of the coach-days, stands half-way down, where the road widens to the forum, an irregular oval, designed for cattle-dealing at certain seasons. Then come old houses with round bay windows, and green trellis-work on their glazed-brick fronts—once

the dwellings of the practitioner and the attorney—mixed with real shops possessing plate-glass windows and enamelled-iron advertisements. Here a passage turns to the left, leading to a lych-gate and the oak-shingled spire of the church rising beyond two vast yews. A pathway flagged with old tombstones winds through the churchyard to a wicket in a box-hedge; and by the wicket I enter the Rectory garden in search of the Rector. The garden is in close touch with the village, as is fitting; not like mine, swept in every wind by smells of firs or clover, or in dead calms breathing its own sweetness: here on malting days comes the admirable aroma of the brewery; the cottages in Mill Lane send their sæcular reek of wood-smoke and soaped linen; with certain winds the dusty smell of meal floats from the little mill that endlessly thumps in the bottom by the brook. Here one can tell whose chimney needs the holly-bush most: at warm noons a hundred dinners pervade the walks, not always altogether unsuitably—hints of pork and greens and onions, the generous blend of the cabbage-nets in the copper. All this speaks of human interests, and is very proper to a priest's close: the Rector himself, I believe, prefers it to all the cloves and mignonette that his wife tends.

Our Rector is one of those singularly able and admirable men who are sometimes to be found in obscure country livings—probably left there with intention of showing to the lay mind what comparative heights of merit are necessary to the attainment of the higher stations in the Church. Out of his parish he is little known; at the Ruridecanal Chapter he is not very popular—is, perhaps, a little feared—by reason of a discomforting directness of apprehension, and a power of bringing men's corporate foolishness home to them singly in a very perspicuous way. Within his own marches he works incessantly; silent, subterranean, for the most part: “no organiser” his neighbours call him, because he is not caught running to and fro, talking and begging; because they cannot comprehend his serene economies of time, his far-laid planning and deep-rooted purpose. Some people say he would have made a grand General; and as I came upon him, after some chase, in the fruit-quarters of the kitchen-garden, he looked military enough with his square figure, close grey hair and moustache, and eyes keen and steady beyond comparisons. He was pruning his greengages; and according to his custom, had cut away barrowfuls of fruit-budded spray—the ground was strewn with lost hopes of Early

Transparents. He and I have an understanding never to criticise one another in our hobbies, but only in our main businesses—so that I never correct his system of pruning (and much else in his long-suffering garden), whilst he, every time he comes to see my paradise, the work of my life, airs some new theory, quaint and fatal, upon rose-budding, or the likes and dislikes of liliums. In return, he would let me make as many false quantities in Virgil as I liked ; and I have a free hand with all the concerns of the parish. Therefore he goes on with his knife, whilst I propound my ideas about old Tomsett at Lycetts. Can we contrive a sort of pensionary holiday for his last year or two, keeping him out of the hedge-bottoms and the House? The Rector, looking reflectively at his radically pruned spurs, tells me that Dr. Culpeper saw him yesterday, and thinks he will be at work again in a day or two, helping with the clearing of Kiln Wood. Then it is to be hoped, as the kindlier year opens, that he may hobble about the fields and find little jobs in hay-time and harvest. There is a small fund in the parish coffers, which will keep the old man in his chimney corner through the fall, providing the eighteenpenny rent, the ounces of tea and sugar and tobacco. And the Doctor says he will need no

providing for after the first cold turn of the winter ; and Dr. Culpeper's death-warrants, when he rarely signs one, are so sure in Arnington experience that we agree without doubts to enlarge the tobacco allowance, and spend the little balance improvidently before March twelvemonth.

Yesterday, the Rector tells me, he was out at Jolland's Corner, with Obed Backshell when he died ; another of the old race, a survivor of a world as far from ours as the Renaissance, the world before the railways, with wide margins and easy paces, wherein the labourers, to judge from such relics as Backshell and Tomsett, were more courteous than half the new gentry now upon the land, and, in one direction at least, much better instructed ; a world the Rector and I conspire to regret. Old Backshell died with that fine apathy common to his race. As year by year the knell rings for such and such an acquaintance, the old men will moralise, "Us must go when we be called ;" and when at last they know that to-night or to-morrow the clerk will slowly climb the crooked stairs, and pull the old rope for their own knell, they take it with a wonderful sense of proportion, with a sense of their place in the natural course of the world, which eighty years' monotonous labour on the land, under the changeless change of the seasons,

seems to impress on the mind as no other experience can. Old Backshell departs, clear-minded almost to the last, neither glad nor sorry, to all appearance fearless even, unconcerned for the Beyond ; no protestations of salvation, no solicitude for those he leaves ; merely the quiet acceptance of a common fact, a homely, even grotesque understanding of the matter, which shuts out any touch of awe. The Rector leaves the fruit-wall, and we saunter towards the wicket into the churchyard. As a young man, he tells me, he held theories that no one had a right to come to threescore and ten : that any one who had worked his utmost and suffered his possible would earn his discharge effectually before then. "I excluded politicians," he says, "and ecclesiastical persons, of course, and so on. But these old people—Backshell, and Tomsett, and Widow Roser—have upset the theory for me. Perhaps really honest head-work might act as I fancied, with Tomsett's hours and meals. Nothing to prevent you and me from reaching a hundred, at any rate!"

As I mount the hill on my way home, the hard way of my neighbours, in life and death, tugs at me more than the gradient ; and not till I reach the turning into my domain by the tall firs on the crest of the ridge, does the mind sink back into the lower

levels of content. The souging of the fir-boughs, the noise of the poultry-yard and the pigeon-loft, the champ-champ of the chaff-cutter and the chance ring of a dairy pail, a score of homely sounds bring back the warmth of life.

I reflect that Tomsett is by this filling his pipe, the kettle singing under the blue checkered vallance of the chimney-breast ; for the time he is as happy as any other in the county. If he understood these vague philanthropies and vicarious discomfortings of ours, perhaps the balance of pity might not be altogether easily struck between us.

March 1st.—This morning we found the wind had gone “up,” as they say here, into the north, and blown away all the cheer of the hint of Spring. The light was dull and hueless ; a smoky haze hung between the lawn and the nearest fir-trunks ; a raw, damp air stirred the dead leaves in the hedges. The incessant trill and whistle of the birds which has filled the garden for a week past ceased at once. There is something more than raw air and leaden cloud in these days of early Spring when the wind is “up.” “London smoke,” people used to call the specific haze, as Gilbert White notes, long before the sea-coal fires could do much in the way of fumigating

the Home Counties ; now that a canopy of soot hangs over a hundred square miles of flues, and streams away on the wind like a vast black flag, they call it "blight," and think it brings the caterpillars to the apple trees. In fine, bright weather, the north wind must blow the smoke up and away into space, for then it hardly reaches us at Arnington ; but, when the air is damp and heavy and the clouds keep down, two hours of north wind bring us the brown haze and unmistakable smell. Many people ridicule the idea that smoke can travel so far ; but no one who has seen the smoke of a gorse-fire carried in a horizontal bar half over a county on a still afternoon, or watched the twenty-mile streak of smoke from a liner in the Channel, or made observations upon the graduated darkness which sometimes covers the forty miles between Arnington and Hyde Park Corner, will have much doubt about the cause of the plague. The meteor comes on with definite front and flanks ; if the wind is a little across, here in the sunshine we can see the hills east or west of Arnington blotted out by the drifting veil ; it lowers the temperature as it comes, and fills the nostrils with a tang of soot and sulphur ; in certain conjunctions with sleet-squalls or thundery cloud it can produce almost appalling effects of colour and gloom. Animal life

hushes and hides before it ; and I believe that to any observant man its unnatural features must always be disquieting and depressing.

On bright, frosty mornings, when I go up to the top of the hilly common behind the house, I see all along the northern horizon a broad, dun bank of cloud, orange-coppery fading to ashy-brown, the coast of that land of London Particular, where it is freezing rawly, where the gas-jets are burning murky-yellow in the olive-coloured air, and where three million pair of lungs are drawing the biting carbonic and sulphurous acids. Down here the rime is just turned to dew and flashes crimson and green on the points of the furze and the cobwebs ; and in the dead calm the sun strikes warm in the face, and draws out the intense sweetness of the fine heath-grass. Even as one is commiserating the people whose morning trains are stuck in a blank yellow world at Battersea or Vauxhall, amid a cannonade of fog-signals, the wind begins to veer and shift northerly ; and before noon the light in Arnington is as the light of the Embankment, with a smell as of Brompton Road.

This censuring of the country by the town is pestilent enough to all whose senses are practised in tolerably clean and unsophisticated media ; but it probably

has further influence than discomfort. All the old people agree in calling our present seasons degenerate ; they can remember the times when the grapes ripened handsomely on almost every house in the village, when there was a functionary who attended on the pruning and care of the vines in the commune, receiving a proportion of the crop as his pay. There are few years now when the school-children would care to set their teeth in the clusters. The summers have changed for the worse ; and perhaps such influences as this smoke-cloud and all it is the sign of, draining and drying of the land, vanishing of woods and brushwood, replacing of the naturally filtering and radiating turf and foliage by square mileage of slate roof and chimney pots, may be enough to account for the change. We know the specific differences of atmosphere produced over small areas of country—down, river-valley, fen ; London, from Woolwich to Kew, from Highgate to Streatham, a stupendous volcano with a million fumaroles, is sufficient to defile the Home Counties at least ; and the Black Country will account for much of the rest.

The alteration of the seasons lies, I think, not so much in differences of temperature which could be shown in tables of averages, as in the prevalence of

coarser transitions, abrupt variations, separation of extremes in rainfall and temperature ; in the lack of what Gilbert White calls "delicate weather."

People with ordinary Londoner's instincts cannot even understand these distinctions ; to them, one of our late summers of brazen drought is the ideal of charming weather ; while to the real countryman who knows and loves the face of the land, nothing is so bitter as the lingering death of green things morning after morning under the cloudless, pitiless blue. And there are not many people now who have not in some degree the Londoner's instincts. The town has overpowered and swallowed up the country—we are cockney from sea to sea. The change is to be traced in quite recent times ; relics of the older state yet remain. Rural sentiment, the *bobus exercet suis* feeling for the jolly farmer and the fine peasantry, by all test of literature, came not so long ago out of the fields and into the streets ; to-day the wind sets the other way, the smell of the foot-lights come across the hay ; London air blows into the smallest village in Arcadia. Charles Lamb at Enfield is far less a cockney than Mr. Hardy in "Wessex," or Mr. Crockett in Ayrshire. We country folk are taught, diverted, governed from Town ; the little businesses proper to our conditions are directed

by gentlemen in London offices, who know of the necessities of the countryside as much as old Tomsett or my gardener Bish does of regulating the traffic in Piccadilly. We, who live the year round in Arcadia, under the snow and through the rain, who have no town houses and London seasons, are almost aliens to the cultured race ; these, when they visit our haunts, treat us as merely the setting of their holiday ; they never seem to apprehend that there may be souls whose whole life is fixed in these picturesque but dull environs. Therefore they eat buns, sitting on our front doorsteps, and saunter or recline in our standing hay-grass, and pitch their cameras and easels in our little thoroughfares ; and perchance, grumble at our unpicturesqueness in the composition. They seem to consider the country as merely a useful adjunct to town life—the air a good tonic, the quiet as making for sleep when sleep has become necessary.

More and more Arcady becomes a ventilating-system for the West End, a bath to remove the season's grubbiness, a rubbing-post for metropolitan *cacoethes*. This view is systematised in the plan of sending children from unhealthier quarters of London into our sanatory Weald. Some of the immigrants, chiefly workhouse orphans, are permanently lodged with us ; others, arrive in the summer for a fortnight's

expatiation. The first class, no doubt, gain vastly in health and well-being ; but make a very ill return to us their hosts. The brief holiday of the summer visitors is not enough to help their bodily ailments ; and if they go home better in mind, one can only shudder for those who stayed behind. In spite of systems of oversight and visitation, it constantly happens that a couple of little Mile-Enders are superimposed upon a half-dozen small Joskins in the cramped and fusty cottage bedrooms, already thrice overcrowded. And I find by research, that the invaders are generally far from being happy ; they find the country insipid, like their betters ; they miss the *opes strepitumque*, the flaring, roaring streets, the fried-fish, and the dainties out of tin cans. They hate and are hated by the autochthones of their own inches ; they scorn the *menu* of their entertainers ; fry of the salt deeps, they sicken in the fresh shallows of Alpheus. If it ended here, and the summer-holiday plan was only a philanthropic waste, Arcadians might suffer gladly the activities of the energetic lady-committees, and the criticisms of their protégés ; but naturally that part of town-infections which the visitors rub off among the pastures new, they effectually leave with us here. One is apt to grow not a little angry at the complete ignoring of the

case of our own youngsters ; for the refection of the youth of Rats' Rents, our little Jockeys and Jennies are to be denied their chance of innocence—the arts and sciences of the slums are to be brought to them at first hand.

The matter has a side to it which may fairly be called diabolical :—the use of “modern advantages” to throw out into the wilderness very subtle seed of all the vileness which centripetally gathers round St. Paul's. And it is a blunder. London, for its own sake, *must* leave us fairly clean and undistracted, the result of our own heaven and earth. It produces no raw material, but only manufactures from imports—imports of sound country bodies and minds year by year, which enable it to live—made into its policemen, porters, and navvies, its wholesome maids, even its clerks and shopmen. It must leave some corners and breadths unvexed by railway whistles and steam hooters, clear of tall chimneys and forges ; it must suppress the busy folk who are always boring for coal in Kent ; it must keep watch on the steady process of de-naturalisation going on in all parts of the land ; this and more it must do if it will keep for itself a place of refreshing and a breeding-ground of healthy frames for its necessary consumption. At present, the golden goose is being slaughtered

with much complacency. Years hence will come endeavours to reproduce lost features—one can fancy the planting of woods by local authorities and sowing of grass-seeds in the midst of interlacing slum-suburbs; even as they plant to-day their little lime-tree rows and lay out a be-pathed desert by the name of “Bink’s Park” in the congested districts of Balham or Hackney. The typical “open space” of modern Greater London is such a dread production that one may well wish to conserve examples of native soil already existing. I wish that some part of the present care for ancient monuments could be extended to modern landscape, and that naturalists would expand their right solicitude for birds’ eggs and ferns into protection for whole heaths, woods, hillsides, and rivers. It might be possible to dedicate some parcels of typical country as museums—forbidding new buildings and extension of trades therein, and rigorously guarding not only the fauna and flora, but the mere beauty of grass and heather, rock and pool. One such natural museum might be made between Derwentwater, Scafell, and Helvellyn; one on Dartmoor; another about the upper Thames, enclosing Oxford; another in the Fens; and certainly one including part of the South Downs and the Weald—say, within a radius of twelve

miles from the high fir-clump behind my garden. Such a harbourage for shy things, bird, beast, and herb, would be a delight for the physiologists ; to it all quaint obsolescent natures would make their way ; among them, perhaps, that almost extinct species, the innate rustic, eternally expecting until the stream of progress shall have run down.

So I meditated, walking off ill humours in wet lanes ; turning my back at last on the smoky wind and drizzling rain as a rift of dun light in the west presented sunset, and consoling myself with the thought of early shutters and candles, and the well-burned slippers, and Horace—Horace or Elia—over the oak-log fire.

2nd.—Waking before daylight I heard the church clock chime clear, and turned over with pleasant, sleepy apprehension that the wind was back in the south again. The morning broke as though no smoke had ever come our way, and all the forenoon was of rememberable beauty. All the true good weather comes out of the south : rainy on the eastern side, windy on the westerly, and pure halcyon days from the meridian. I idled in the garden at small businesses of tying and nailing, leaving severer works for a darker day. The crocuses spread themselves wide to the sun, lines and mounds of yellow fire ; but

no bees came to sprawl in their cups. Hoverer-flies buzzed about the clumps; the hoverer which in its middle place between the over-virtuous bee and the criminal wasp, represented to my childish fancy a not unfriendly type of the mean; dare I say, some sort of personal ideal? Everywhere rang the metallic "pink-pink" of the chaffinch and the "pitcher-wee" of the greater tit. Of late that "pink-pink," indissolubly connected with the scientific, industrious, and enormous destruction of fruit-buds on the plum-trees, has so grated on my ears as to suggest the clink of the ramrod in the old muzzle-loader, the *brutum fulmen* I keep for such thieves; but to-day in the bland air and warmth it has a softer descant. The modern gardener has need of soothing hours such as these to maintain his patience in the endless war with nature and with art, with weed and blight and grub and bird, with the destroyed balance of evil that man is answerable for, with the boy-bandit and the prowling, excavating tabby. If only the boy would catapult the cat effectually, or the cat catch the finch, or the finch eat the caterpillar! But ay me! the chaffinch and the bullfinch trim out the fat bloom-buds, and tear the crocuses for fun, the mouse noses down to the new-sown peas, the cat gambols upon one's choicest seedlings, and the boy in the season of

the year visits the cherry trees ; and so the vicious circle speeds—a part of the great gardener's paradox (which prevails this side of the hedge of Eden), the paradox that all gardening is a deadly war with Nature, needing a mind always alert to guard or attack,—and yet when all's done we avail nothing ; Nature strikes her balances and of her bounty gives us so much or so little, for all our pains.

My attempts upon the paradox, in the way of laying in peach-shoots on the south wall, tacking the sprays so that the silky buds lay close to the old red-brick and yellow lichens, yet so that the reddening fruit should swell at ease in time to come—my lazy labours gave way about noon to a promenade up and down the long grass walk that runs through the middle of the kitchen garden, a straight eighty yards or so, three yards wide, scythe-mown, not too close ; on either side a wide flower border, then espalier apples, and behind them the worts and roots which here claim their kin with the parterre, and are nowise discordant. One end of this walk widens out round a stone sundial without a gnomon ; the other drops to the meadow gate, the pastoral hillside, and the outer world. In the borders to-day are great tufts of yellow crocus ; clumps of daffodil are already bristling with flower sheaths, the old fat-headed sort, with the

nutmeg and cinnamon smell, and with English names, Butter-and-Eggs, Codlins-and-Cream. The later breeds, lovely slender trumpets and stars, with all hideous names of Boggsii and Jinksii, grow by themselves in a private quarter. Violets, mere allowed trespassers, tangle about the roots of the espaliers. The crown-imperials are thrusting their bright green domes through the ground. After the daffodils will come the old tall tulips; in May the flag-iris will follow; in June white lilies; in July a host of old common roses. It is a walk of old flowers altogether—the blossoms of the classics. I please myself with the fancy that if Shakespere were to come along it he would find there nothing strange. But assuredly many things would be missing, that have died out of use and memory, extinct before there were catalogues. We can guess that the flowers of three centuries ago were mostly small, as we should think; purely, a little palely coloured; very delicately sweet. There is loss as well as gain in the evolution of the exhibition carnation and the fancy pansy, as in all other. When all is said, no finest Mrs. John Laing or L'Idéale comes near the brier-rose in the hedges for colour or sweetness—to those at least who can hold the balance between force and delicacy, or rather, see the true strength in the fineness; as we

find six square inches of Turner vignette obliterate a half-acre of palette-knife energies from last year's Academy, or a bit of old ballad refrain abolish an epic glorious in special type and a limited edition of signed and numbered copies.

Nothing is sacred to the florist ; but by help of cottage gardens and the obscure amateur some certain beauties have escaped him : damask roses, white thorn, queen lilies survive his dealings and the epidemics induced by his in-breeding and fantastic selection. In my double border I conserve something of the unimproved, the unrectified (as the fulip-breeders say) Flora. Elsewhere I have plots for the last certificated hybrid and the seedling with three crosses to its name, for I desire to prove all things ; but in my grass walk I hold fast the good of twenty generations, Chaucer's posy, Spenser's odours, Shakespere's tinctures, a harmonious company of blossoms, unvexed by the upstarts of the age, the cosmopolitan canaille, aliens from Cathaya, or that whole World which is New. It is no small instruction to idle round the quarters, even at this naked opening of the year, when headstone labels so largely represent the dormant life ; to pace from the solitary primrose to the home of *Primula Himalaica*, from cabbage-roses to the Teas of '95 ;

and to reflect how much of all the garden holds was dear to one's grandfather, how very much our grandsons will despise. The true catholic, the man in the mean state, judicious between ancestry and descendants, finds sufficient delight, even in the early essays of the opening year, to compensate many a loss. The winter may have destroyed his favourite pentstemon ; but here are the snowdrops, thicker than ever, under the hazels and the holly hedge.

17th.—Dull weather, with low clouds and windless air, has for the last week drowned all the landscape in blue-grey haze, but once or twice pierced by shafts of sun which touched out wonderful contrasts of willow-rows or tufted hill flushing against the purple distance. Then one night a stormy sunset, flaming in the west and firing all the ring of the horizon, foretold change. Under the tossed-up waves of crimson, scudded little ragged vapours already in the night, grey and dismal. It signified both wet and wind ; the more certainly as Bish the gardener thought we wouldn't get a change before the next quarter of the moon ; for Bish's predictions are frequently right, when inverted.

One might naturally expect country folk in the Weald to grow up to some judgment of the weather. Observations through plate-glass windows, and by

means of telegrams, are of course without educational force ; but here, living mostly *sub Jove*, and with all the heaven from Ditchling Beacon to Camp Hill to study, we are miserable meteorologists. The main difference, the Rector says, between most modern Christians and the Jews of the New Testament, lies in the ability credited to the latter of reading the physical weather. Bish, as far as my observation goes, fairly represents the village mind in the matter. He has large faith in the Almanack. "The Almanack says as how we shall have floods in June ;" and in the June drought—"dryth," Bish calls it—a new interest wakes in the Almanack's prediction of snow for the end of August. He believes in the influence of the moon : if you will tell him what day the moon "changes" (he is quite unable to make the observation for himself) he will announce such and such consequential disturbances. He tells me that in whatsoever point the wind sits when the sun "crosses the line," thence it will prevalently blow for the quarter. Other guides he has, as that a certain star (he is not sure which, but once pointed out Vega in a doubtful way) governs the winds at certain junctures ; that the reflection of the fire in a room, seen brightly on the window panes, presages rain ; and, of course, that curious and universal belief that the visit of a German

band ("them Germans," we call them), and the lifting up of their agonizing Volkslieder, is a sure prognostic of a "fall." His professed ability to smell the icebergs in cold weather is probably some remnant of undigested natural history books ; but his self-supporting theory that wind causes thunder and thunder wind ; his elastic definition of "frosts"—from a heavy August dew to a January blizzard—his formula as to the "sun and wind getting together ;" his belief that the "breaking up of the springs" is connected with storms at sea : all this is a marvel of absurdity in a man with eyes, free of the open sky from dawn to dark. In the Meteorological Department these theories of the inner consciousness might be looked for ; but in country people I can only explain the thing by supposing it part of the law whereby, rather than remain braced and keen to watch the world accurately, and take every appearance on its own merits, the lazy intellect declines upon generalisation, formalised rules, and Laws of Nature.

The day following the wild sunset was blotted out by driving rain that moved in curving pillars up the valley all the morning. At noon the grey veil was broken up, and great masses of cloud, thundery-white at the crest and a deep blue-grey at the bellying base, drew like an aerial fleet out of the south-west, falling

presently into separate columns, five or six from horizon to horizon, with wide interspaces of very clear sky. This formation, with the steady sailing motion of the masses, suggests the thought of warships in line, the old three-deckers with mountainous canvas, not the present Vulcanian workshops. The wind still blew fresh ; and after the exhausted rain every distance and tone of the landscape was intensely clear in a dead broad daylight, the sun held behind one of those processions of towering cloud. In the afternoon I walked over to Lycetts Farm to see old Tomsett, and as I went every ploughed field, copse, clump of bloomy tufted palm, or crook of road was a piece of pure colour, purple or red-grey or creamy white. A newly-rolled meadow on the hillside, seen between fir trees near at hand, was a square of green so vivid and full as almost to impress the eye like flame. As I reached the crown of the hill, the Forest Ridge rose into sight in the north, keenly clear at the edge and glooming under the packing clouds, a dark bar between a streak of pale green sky and the strong inlay of colour in field and wood on the nearer hills. The clouds, though broken from their serried lines into detached mounds and rounded piles—the “herded elephants” of Keats—still veiled the sun, and it was the hour of local colour at the

height. I turned from the majestic apparatus of clouds and the salient beauty of the land into the dark of Tomsett's cottage not quite contentedly. The room is a kitchen of the common pattern, a low ceiling of dusty plaster and black timbers, rickety windows with leaded panes, one battered door to the outer air. The sempiternal kettle bubbled on the stove ; a cat dozed on the faded patchwork cushion in the armchair ; a couple of photographs and a stuffed plover graced the walls. Over all hung the dull fustiness mixed of damp foundations, rotting thatch, wood fires, cooking, and old corduroy. The lattice, patched with brown paper, looked on the garden-plot of wintered kale-stumps and a moss-smothered apple tree.

By the fire, sitting upright, stick in hand, in round frock, long gaiters, and an ancient billycock hat, was Tomsett. The old man is good-looking, as looks go among our plain-featured people—has a strong brow, winter-apple cheeks, and a fringe of white whisker under his jaw ; his eyes have the weary, patient look that so many old eyes have here—one of the saddest looks I know.

He tried to say something by way of thanks for the trouble people had taken for him. Muster Lewknor—they never call him the Rector in the cottages—

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had been to see him, and told him as how it would be all right for the winter ; but clearly life was so much on the lees that nothing greatly mattered. I made him fill his pipe, and talk of other things. Like all the old fellows of his date, he is nothing less in the world than *laudator temporis acti*, on principle. The old folk are always ready to point out the improvements they have seen ; they are even cruelly careless about the destruction of old houses or old scenes ; old associations hardly appeal to them. But with appreciation founded on solid advantage, they regretfully recall the days of their youth, and most considerably take exception to the common conceptions of advance. "'Sims as no one don't want me now," says old Tomsett, raking out a coal for his pipe. "'Cep'n in hayin' there's hardly a job to be got. Ruinin' the land ; that's what it is ! No mendin', no cleanin' ! Why, there's enough stuff in they dicks to mend all the land, if they'd clean 'em out. Look what that does to a meada ! Why, you can see where there's bin naun but a cooch-fire for two years after. Ruinin' all the land, that's what it is !" He shakes his head and muses sadly, no doubt, on the clean busy farming of the fifties.

"But you'd bad times, some years ?" I suggest.

"Ay," he says, "but they weren't that close as

they be now. They'd give you bread and drippin' at any farmhouse; and taters was that cheap, afore the blight come,—why, you could have almost as many as you wanted. And then, look at the work! After harvest, we'd sometimes be threshin' all the year till the seed-cuttin' began; and then if the weather was rough, we could alas go back to the barn again; sometimes we had to thresh out to make room for the new corn. Of course, you see, that was always money comin' in. Now, when they threshes with the machine, 'tis all done in a week. And, oh dear, the waste of it too! The corn falls into the cavin's, and when that's laid a few months you can see it all comin' up green with the wheat. In the old time, if a man was threshin' and let his corn get in the cavin's, in the barn, why, he'd hear on it! It was the same-like with harvest, and hayin', too. That *was* harvest; all mowin'—no swappin' or baggin'. The young chaps 'ud go upwards hay-cuttin': six shillin's a day we got, and as much stout as we could drink; and after that we'd time to get back and do the cuttin' at home. I rec'lec' once cuttin' all over where they built the Crystial Pallis; they let us have all the rabbits that was turned out—a lot on them there was, to be sure! And once I was mowin' at Nonsuch Park in Surrey, as you may

have heard on ; well, there was four chaps there as called themselves the Flyaway Mowers ; they said nobody could cut so much in a week as they could. They'd got a barrel of beer of their own under a tree, and that. I was mowin' after them, and I wasn't not very far behind 'em, all day."

I can believe it, for all the shrunken limbs and knotted rheumatic hands. After a longish silence, sacred perhaps to waking memories, the old man hobbles across the room to the fire to shift the kettle and relight his stumpy clay. "I aches," he explains, as he settles stiffly back into his seat ; "I be that stiff-like in the knees."

I suggest it is time he took a rest ; he began so early.

"I started on work when I was turned seven," he says. "I had to walk from Hornlye to Blackhatch to my work every day, for eighteenpence a week ; sometimes, hayin' and such like, I'd not be in bed three nights together ; just lay down in the stable for an hour or so : and then get thirty shillin's for six months of that."

He stops to draw at his rattling pipe, and then goes on : "That was when the work'us used to be where Muster Dickes lives now—Dickes' Folly, they calls it: it was called the Clappers, then. All the

lads on the parish was put out to farmin' when they was ten or eleven. They had a meetin' in the evenin' in the long room at the Greyhound, at Martinmas, and at Lady Day: all the lads 'ud be there, and the farmers, and the auctioneer. They'd ask a lad, 'What can you do?' and he'd say, 'I can drive a plough, and hedge, and cut wood, or go with a team o' bullocks;' and then the auctioneer he'd say, 'Fifty shillin's!' and one farmer he'd say, 'Three pound;' and so they'd go up to five pound or so, and he'd be hired for the half year, and be right off the work'us. If he took a job afore that, the parish took all the money as he earned, and found him in clothes. And they used to put out pigs to be fatted in the parish; there was one old Denman had, as used to be the blacksmith; I never see sech a hog as that were. Ah, it was good times then!

"And it's good times for some on 'em now," he went on, "but not for them as is on the land. I reckon when I'm about again, I can do as good a day's job as the young chaps; but it's all cuttin' off here, and puttin' down there, and there's naun left for such as I be. Well, I shan't be here much longer; but the young 'uns won't be better off nor what we was, nor so well, for all their chat. Muster Lewknor, he was a-sayin' as how things

goes in a circle like, and everything comes back some day just where it was. If the young chaps could see what it was like when I was a boy, they wouldn't talk like they does. Good times, they was, and no mistake."

At this point came in Widda Packham, a sort of far-off relation of Tomsett's, a cheery, tublike little woman who looks after him at spare moments, and I think amends his tea with small extras of her own. After an easy curtsy to me, she turned to Tomsett almost as to a child—

"There you be again with that pipe o' yourn, Mars' Tomsett! And you know as chewin's a sight better for your lights!" Then, as her sleeves were already up to her hard red elbows, and a comprehensive "clean-up" was evidently in view, I retired.

Thinking much of Tomsett's "old times" on my way home, I hardly noticed how the colour had gone from sky and land and a grey evening was shrouding the world, with promise of a night of rain. Easy enough to say that so the colour dies out of life towards the close; but in converse with the old people I gain a clear impression that they judge very largely things on their own merits; and that for the farm labourer the former days were really better than these. And among our hymns to Progress, advancing

along a thousand various lines of national life, let us admit, if for mere contrast's sake, one little lament for a fallen glory, the sad complaint of old Tomsett and his kind.

25th.—A lovely variant of early Spring days ; not that perfect thing when sun and wind are on the meridian together, with soft warmth and sailing clouds, but a noon of still air, the sun hot upon the face, so that the little ruffling breeze from the south-east which blows and falls once in a minute is none too cool. In the garden-walks the tortoiseshell butterflies got up under my feet, and hovered by sixes and sevens at once on the white carpet of the arabis, where the bees kept up a steady drone. The sky was cloudless, save where low down in the west streaks and streamers of vapour lay all day, showing here and there against their horizontal lines the rounded shapes whose lightly crisped and hardened edge is the first faint sign of thunder. The sunlight was broad and pure ; every shadow was full of vivid colour. The mind, which perhaps has need of the semblance of fixed points in the smooth lapse of being, draws the white chalk score under to-day, as definitely this year's opening day of Spring.

The day before, I had met the Rector and his wife in the village ; and Mrs. Lydia had called to me that

Alice was coming home that night. I knew that on such a morning as this she would be early up the hill and in the garden, with a hundred histories of her travels, and uncounted questions about old friends of the flowers and beasts. I was sitting under the yew hedge, and had just allowed the protest which all the temper of the day seemed to make against the Euripides I had opened half an hour before, when I saw her come in at the meadow gate—a vision of pink frock and yellow hair unbound, the one some inches lower, the other as much higher in the world than at our last meeting, as befits eleven. She did not see me ; and as she came up the grass walk she first of all fell on her knees beside the great clump of daffodils at the corner, with an odd little cry of endearment, and a caressing way with the hands that nobly refrained from picking and stealing. The moment after she sprang to her feet, and began to dance up the path, at first perhaps with some little toe-pointing and the school-chassez not wholly forgotten, but after the first three steps with nothing more than the hop-skip-and-jump of a child too happy to be still, the expression of delight in perfectly light and graceful motion. She had a bunch of wild daffodils in her hand which acted thyrsus ; and pink frock, hair ribbon, shoe-strap and all, she

might have been the forerunner of the gayest Spring procession that ever wound across Greek frieze or vase. A moment after, with a fervid grasp of the small fingers on my own, before our greetings were well over, I was swept away to visit the pigeon-house, and the calf in the yard, and Zero the terrier, amid a torrent of question and answer at once, pointed by the little toss of the head which shakes the hair out of the blue eyes and gives a breathing pause for the next remark.

The pigeons rose a hundred strong with a thunderous rattle of wings as we came to the barn, beat up against the wind till they cleared the fir clump, then swung round till the wind was behind them, and came headlong down the sky in a storm of flashing plumes, to settle fluttering on the red roof again and renew the exercises we had interrupted, with glistening throat and pompous step—

“girando e mormorando.”

We recognise with shrill delight all the old friends, the chocolatey tumbler with no hair on his head, and the great old runt, and the nun that wouldn't leave his wife to fly with the others, because she had the rheumatism and had to stay behind. The calf danced round the straw-yard for us, because he

wouldn't be allowed to dance when he was a grown-up cow ; and Zero signified unchanged devotion by a long-drawn grunting sigh, half-choked by the arm round his neck. Then we came upon a rabbit-hutch, where no rabbit-hutch used to be, some private concern of the boot-boy's, containing a Himalayan mamma and a small family ; and I found myself forgotten while Alice hauled out the litter by their ears, each diviner than the last, and Zero looked up with trembling tail which meant that he loved Alice even more than them.

At this point arrived Mrs. Lydia, in chase of her niece ; and I turned back to the garden with her, leaving Alice to her new friends. Mrs. Lydia has no children of her own now, and spends all upon the child of her sister in India. If strong devotion mixed with the rarest kind of serene wisdom can do anything to shape the growing life, little Alice should one day be a princess of the right fairy-tale line. The Rectory rearing, together with her own inheritances, already seems to show itself. I see Mrs. Lydia often watching the child with a kind of soft prophetic smile, noting the little ways of manner and carriage, the clear truth looking from the eyes, the fine scornful anger of the mouth and chin.

As we pace the walks, we talk about Alice, as

Mrs. Lydia is always glad to do. The pink frock and yellow locks flash upon us at corners over the daffodils, or glimmer far off among the orchard trunks. And as the blithe creature stoops over a butterfly or mocks the starling's whistle or the nut-hatch's pipe, simple and joyous as any of them, we muse upon the estrangement between man and the beasts, which not even such a go-between as Alice may compose. It is a little saddening for us who would like to be friends with the wild things ; something may be done by patience and quiet movement and knowledge of when and where ; but on the whole the lower creation will have none of us. Our friends with the bombarding weapons, from the catapult to the hammerless ejector, with the specimen box and the butterfly-net, industriously maintain the rift ; and our own necessary interferences are too great. They cut us, in fact, all the league of little lives, and I for one cannot entirely put it aside. Alice herself, this vision of pure happiness and light heart, with enchantments of softest finger-tips and murmurs of caressing nonsense, cannot charm them. The red-admirals in the early autumn will come and sit on her finger, but for a slice of apple, not for love ; the saturnine toads regard her impassively for a minute and then straddle away to their own devices ;

the ants, she says, will never stop even and look at her, but always keep on running, running. Just now she comes up with a history of a black bee discovered in the act of choosing his lodgings ; "he went into, oh, twenty or thirty holes in the greenhouse wall ; he *was* so particular, and at last he found one, just what he wanted, so he came out again and turned round and went in tail foremost, and now he's living there for good." It is to be feared that he would prefer his hole in the old mortar to any invitation of Alice's, even to the best bedroom in the new dolls' house. There is another side to this. "I do wish," says Alice, reflectively, "that I could get into that hole and see what he's doing inside." A piece of that other Alice's mushroom, on the diminishing side, might alter the present relations considerably.

For myself, the incommunicableness of birds and beasts is only part of a sense of alienation from the whole natural world, felt more keenly at certain hours of the earth and sky, under certain aspects of the wide champaign, hill-horizons, dark woods. No man can put his pride as man from him and win admission into the mysteries beneath his feet. The more intensely we feel the power of the earth, its brooding light, its shadowed terrors, its sweet silence, its still

unchanging procession of heart-breaking loveliness, the more we know ourselves to be uninitiate; the nearer to tears its beauty brings us, we see the clearer that there is a secret we cannot share.

April 3rd.—I went down to the village to-day to see the Spring Fair, which has been held in the street, between the church and the old toll-gate, for five hundred and odd years by record. Under a grey cloudy daylight the street shows a crowd of men and beasts, the customary wide spaces of desert mud being thronged for the day with the agricultural "interest" of all the country-side. In the roadway stand bullocks in small droves, kept in station by shrill yells and the merciless ash-plants of a peculiar race of ragged nondescripts, half-gipsy and half-tramp, who follow the fairs and markets. Here are deep red, long-backed Sussex steers, black Scots, miserable little cross-bred heifers, which huddle or bolt in puzzled misery. Horses of dejected appearance are tied in strings by the footpath, or ridden at a gallop through the thick of the traffic by long-coated gipsies with wonderful seats, accompanied with halloos and the "hi—hi—hi!" which seems the traditional encouragement to unwilling nags on these occasions. Near the church entry there are some

wattle pens of sheep ; and it is well to notice the difference between the faces here and those of the cattle-dealers. Here are many of a passing type, middle-aged men, ruddy and open faced, in clean frock and gaiters, carrying an ancient, green carriage umbrella. The new type, which bargains among the bullocks and horses, is more various, but to my fancy, generally unpleasant to see. There are heads bending over the sheep pens that might have been the originals of the fourteenth-century corbels in the church. Among the cattle-dealers there is hardly a face which does not bear the stamp of the hour which must sweat her sixty minutes to the death. Altogether there is a prevalence of expressions hard, coarse, and animal. From the gentleman-farmer in check tail-coat and cord breeches, to the butcher in a greasy mackintosh, all look as though they ate too much, and drank something more. Whether farming be on its last legs or no, market takings find something still for the hotel bars. Towards dusk, after the weekly market at Tisfield, you can meet the farmers' traps going home, some at a gallop, many with loose reins, and foul-mouthed or sleepy tipsiness in command. The "Griffin" at Tisfield on market day is a warm corner. You will find the farmer who was late home on the market Wednesday, strolling

through his mangolds with his gun the day after, while the roots are spoiling and frost is near. We all know that British farming is ruined ; and watching its practitioners at Arnington Fair, big, red-faced, gross men, full of beef and beer and tobacco, driving very fair nags in tolerable traps, dressing well enough in country cut and solid materials, one begins at last to divine that great mystery of Agricultural Depression which so concerns Editors and Reviewers and writers upon statistics in the morning papers.

Halfway down the street I found a little group before a mixed lot of steers ; a tall gentleman-farmer, lean, Jewish-featured, black-moustached, in neat riding breeches and a tail-coat ; next him a dealer, a large man, with a heavy puffed face and orange whiskers, in a top-coat and muddy trousers ; in the rear an old fellow in a ragged frock, the *Damœtas* to the hawk-nosed *Ægon*, a heap of patches and clouts surmounted by a wonderful head, broken-nosed, blear-eyed, toothless, hair and beard a tangle of grizzled curls, the mahogany skin puckered with a thousand wrinkles. These three, as the farmer and the dealer wrangled, and the drover leaned on his stick, impassively chewing, very well represented some several orders in the agricultural interest. They contrive to live, not ill, I judge, according to

their respective standards of living ; how far those standards, and those clearly separated orders of men encounter the simple foundation-law of the land, is a question worth, perhaps, more thought than some present matters of debate obtain.

I meet the Rector, going about the throng with his mind keenly attent to the human part, here speaking to a late parishioner who is back again for to-day, here watching for a moment some *entente* of bad characters by the "Wheatsheaf" door. I see Mrs. Lydia, towed hither and thither among horses' hocks and bullocks' horns by little Alice, who does not see, I hope, all the reckless cruelty, the slashing hits at noses and knees ; cruelty which in the gross means a large money loss to stock farmers every day in the year. The adage "never take your beast back from market" is sound enough so long as the drovers are allowed to depreciate all that comes under their hands with brutality at once random and calculated. There is no difficulty in understanding that farmers should care nothing for other men's cattle, as just now, when two hogs in one of the pens were fighting furiously and momentarily tearing the market value out of each other, the ring of disinterested pigmen stood about the battle, shouting with laughter, and hardly making way for the owners

to part the fray. But it is hard to see why a man should suffer his own property to be knocked and bullied out of its value, unless one refers it, with many another riddle besides, to that complex affair of causes and effects, the mystery of Agricultural Depression.

I went back to Idlehurst about noon, to find the order and peace of the pleasance deeper and saner for even the little tumult of the Fair. Bish not being in his most active state to-day, owing to the remnant of a cherished cough, left from the winter's inevitable "brown-kiters," I ran the hoe over certain borders myself. The sun struggled out and the wind freshened, and I was able to indulge that small destructive instinct which I allow in cutting groundsel and shepherd's-purse through the collar and turning the roots of little grasses up to the atmosphere. The daffodils, undashed this year by the accustomed sleet, swayed in full glory ; the crown-imperials stood rigid at the full height of their ebony stems clear of the whorls of pale green leaves. The Van Thol tulips shone between me and the sun with the translucent glow which is their true colour, far above the raw and dead hue they show by reflected light. Well out of the range of these, shone together the cushions of purple aubrietia and clear yellow alyssum ;

the contrast of Alice's paintbox, to be sure, but of Turner's too. As I looked over all these down on the village, where the lowing beasts and shouts of men, the noise of sheep and dogs made an intermittent murmuring hubbub, I found myself propounding a sort of sum in Rule of Three, unanswered, as my sums are wont to be ; the terms being Arnington Fair, and the Bank Crossing, and the quiet of this plot of garden within its inviolable walls.

Towards evening I walked out by the field path to Blackhatch, facing the setting sun, a level blaze of light between the tree stems in the shaws. I turned back soon after the light began to go and the scents of the earth to rise in the cool-settling dusk. There are hours which bring out all natural odours in their strength, as there are seasons which strike out the fullest colour of every surface ; and this evening was charged with odour to the full. I often think that we greatly neglect the sense of smell ; treat it as nugatory, if not as something a little vicious by association, without making Aristotle's distinction between amateurs of roses and of pomades. There is a great amount of pleasure, none the less, for those who use their noses as they should use their eyes, with strenuous discrimination—the dilet-tanti of smells. There is a pleasure to be gained

from the thousand natural perfumes of the country, quite comparable to that given by a fine colour or a perfect musical interval. Sometimes (my own case) the sensorium retains and associates scents to a strange degree, and fixes unfailing and disproportionate pleasure upon many that are in themselves indifferent. One of my earliest remembrances, the smell of pears stored in a cupboard—as they were stored somewhere in pinafore days—touches a strong, irrational pleasure ; other recollections running back to childhood, as the scent of tulips open in the sun, of gummy buds of poplar trees, of the damp mortar-and-matting atmosphere in an old church, have each their singular effect of delight. One or two others I trace to later dates ; damp garden quarters under the early Spring sun closely imitate the mouldy reek of Oxford meadows which the floods have left for a couple of days, and recall, as nothing else can, the time when one rowed in the Torpids. Hay half made and a garden weed-smother have associations of amazing force, accidental but indelible. These go back to the twenties ; after that it is too late to gather associations, if indeed there are any yet unattached.

To-night every bank and hedge breathed, as I passed, its proper atmosphere ; every lightest breeze

brought something new. The soil threw up incense at every step, the scarcely budded branches set it afloat, all of the fine and recondite kind. Almost any nose can appreciate hay, or lilac-blossom, or even a bean-field, exquisite differences though these be ; but a budding quick-hedge after a shower, or moist young bracken, or a larch plantation on a spring evening, require *nares emunctæ*. As I passed along the wood road, above all the separate notes—notes of primrose clump, bluebell spike, trodden tussock, and wet moss—came the general woodland air, the breath of the very trunks and twigs, of trickling water, of fir bark, of the dead leaves of fifty years. As I came out into the open, I caught the smell of a dusty road in the twilight cool, not unlike the steam which goes up when raindrops begin to run together and darken the dry soil of garden beds—a smell that brings recollections of drought and timely showers. Then as I passed the hedge-corner by Bish's cottage, came a blue drifting haze from the garden patch, the half pungent, half sweet aroma of a rubbish fire, which, acting through my idiosyncrasy of nostril, brought me home in a pleasantly sentimental state of retrospect. I turned into the dark warmth of the cowshed as I went across the yard to find one more luxury of recollection in

the breath of the placidly munching Jerseys; and after that I fell into a speculation about possible future evolution of a neglected sense, classifications and systems, education, and so forth. I mused of national collections of scents, as our present picture-galleries; of scent-concerts, a fantasia on lime-blossom, a sea symphony, tarry and phosphoric, a nocturne of garden plots in summer moonlight:—"Delights" (as More in Utopia) "let in at . . . their nostrils as the pleasant relishes and seasonings of life, which nature seems to have marked out peculiarly for man. . . ." Delights better appreciated, perhaps, if some change of taste should abolish such modern anæsthetics as patchouli and penny smokes, to say nothing of the world of municipal stench which at present deprave and obtund an undeveloped sense. Meanwhile I enjoy a further dimension of human pleasures than a multitude of my fellows possess who season their atmosphere with sempiternal Navy Cut, or that perfect blend of shag and fusee in a juicy clay.

14th.—Bish's cough has during the last few days been complicated with a digestive disturbance; everything he took, as he told me, why, it retaliated; and he reckoned as how there must have been thunder about which had effervesced in his inside. In these

circumstances, he sent up his son Henery as his substitute in the garden. Henery is about nineteen ; has a lanky frame, like a skeleton in corduroys ; his boots are enormous, and shuffle through the world soundingly ; his face is freckled, his hair ginger-red, and his eyes small, light, and shifty. I think he would be a sorrow to his father, if the rubs of the world had left in Bish any property so active as grief. Henery works under protest ; every turn of the spade marks off the time towards six o'clock, the rank pipe, the tea with onions, the hour of the stroll "up-street" with Frenk and Erree, of the *badinage* with Maëry's or Loow-easer's responsive charm. I hardly like to leave him alone with my tulips, the flaming Keizerskroons and soft Rose Luisantes that border the quarter where he works. Those vast feet have a way of flattening, with half-malicious clumsiness, any choice growth they come near ; but I want to go and see Bish *père*, so after warnings, received in sullen silence, without a moment's lifting of the dull eyes, I leave the youth in the middle of a solid piece of digging and take the field path to the cottage they call Dogkennel, in the bottom by the brook. Small and damp and green, it stands on the fringe of a large copse, round it a clayey garden patch, containing little beyond the stubs of the winter greens and last year's scarlet-runners

decaying on the sticks. Under instructions, Bish works admirably ; but he has no power of initiative. The cottage is a poor timber and plaster affair, the old thatch coming down to the middle of the casements, and shrunk away from the one black chimney-stack. In the living room, with its close heat and ancient smell, I find my man. Without his hat, Bish is picturesque ; he has a high crown, bristled over with thin hair, a narrow peaked face whose deep-scored wrinkles converge to the chin and pointed beard, melancholy eyes that speak a philosopher on the defensive against the conspiring world. I think his must be a surviving or recurrent type of physiognomy ; he belongs to the Commonwealth, to a certainty ; the Rector calls him The Regicide. He would become jackboots and a buff coat perfectly, and would not be amiss in a frock ; but no ancestral instincts rule his clothes. Bag-kneed, frayed check trousers, some treasured cast-off, without so much as leggings to ease the anomaly, a black coat with pendulous tails, and a battered straw hat, disguise the Roundhead all too well. As I find him bare-headed he looks the Ironside again, though a dyspeptic one. As I come in, he puts down a thumbed copy of Culpeper's Herbal, which was his father's, and which he still reads with vague notions of profit, although

he does not know a tithe of the herbs by sight, and never gathered simples under sun or moon. He sometimes tells me there's a deal more in those old books than what you'd think for. "Doctors" (here bubbles up the latent distrust and hostility to the regular practitioner, which goes together with absolute dependence upon that hardworking gentleman in hours of need : a sentiment running back perhaps to times of witchcraft and home medicine of the *pro mirifico* kind, a rebellion against hard and fast rules and the stern categories of —osis and —itis)—"doctors, they don't seem to reckon much on 'em ; but it might be better for some on us if we used them herbs more. Father, he was wonderful fond of them ; he'd go out of a night to gather 'em under the Planets. Once" (and here comes the inevitable triumphant instance) "he was bad with the 'sipelas in the face ; and the book said as how mash-maller was the thing to cure it ; and he hadn't got no mash-maller, so he took and put on the tea-leaves out of the pot, two or three times ; and that took it clean away. And them gipsy-women, he declares, they be won'erful clever, sometimes. There was one came to the door sellin' skewers a year' two ago, and she told his wife to take dandelion tea ; and that took the slug off her liver as quick as quick." Such is Bish's general position toward physic

when in his ordinary health. When he is on his club, as now, the elder Culpeper makes way for the younger, and father's book becomes somewhat academic.

In answer to my present inquiries, he says that doctor seed him yesterday, and reckoned as how he wouldn't be right till the stomach was mended. Yes, he'd been middlin' bad ; comed on swimey-like in the head, and the wind it terrified him all night. So he runs on, cataloguing with real enjoyment the sensations and motions of various parts of his inside, and exercising the envied privileges of the family invalid. I hear, not for the first time, that his heart was right up in his mouth ; this he connects somehow with cramps in the legs, "something crule." "I 'spect I got 'em when I was carter-boy. The roads they *was* bad, then, I can tell you. I've knowed a waggin go a-slidin' with the bottom on the road, and the ruts was that deep as the wheels didn't tetch the bottom. We'd have to stop, when we was goin' to work in the mornin', and tip the water out of our boots, and wear 'em like that all day ; no dryin' of 'em ; I 'spec's that's what's give me the cramps." Likely enough, and much besides in those hard years, poor Bish of the shaky frame and annual brownkickers. But you never gave yourself a fair chance, by reason of the prodigious physicking you have suffered. All

our cottage folk drink deep of medicine the year round ; they rarely find themselves in a state of health to which some sort of physic is not applicable. It is a normal state to be "taking" something ; puffed patents, seas of "mixture," pills, "iles," liniments, powders, ever pour from the little shop which combines pharmacy and "fancy goods." And the cast-iron constitutions, the *dura messorum ilia* are not let off with the guarded persuasions of the pharmacopœia. Mrs. Bish was telling me the other day what a fine thing turpentine is, taken internally—"painter-chaps, they takes a lot of it." And then there is the popular remedy of small-shot. When we are troubled, as we frequently are in Sussex after heavy courses of pork and greens, with a feral indigestion ; or when women suffer from what doctors call *globus hystericus* ; we at once diagnose "the raising of the lights," and treat it *secundum artem*. As the lights are supposed to leave their proper station and ascend the windpipe, the most natural thing is to weight them down ; therefore we prescribe sparrow shot—five or six to a dose, say twice a day. Bish has an aunt who got through a seven-pound bag, and lives. Bish himself, a natural sceptic, is doubtful of the rationale ; but reflects that jockeys they gives 'em to horses, allowing the customary *à fortiori* argument from the lower creation.

The Rector thinks that the popular notion of the human inside is constructed from the demonstrations given at pig-killing time ; but I fancy that any reference to fact would fetter the confident theories of anatomy one hears. Disease is almost personified : it "flies to the legs," "settles on the lungs," or "ketches the liver." The more outrageous the history of internal commotion, the more calmly assured is the statement. Old Tomsett told me, after the last gale we had, that the wind got inside of him and terrified him pretty nearly all night. Of course, the transformations of technical words one hears in these narratives are too common for note ; but when Mrs. Bish informed me that her sister at Lewes had got the Eating Diabolus, I thought for a moment that I discovered a case of demoniac possession.

I was not sorry to leave the hot little room and shake off the fusty air in the wood-paths. I expect to see Bish at work again the day after to-morrow ; his constitution at fifty, though battered and shaken, seems proof against almost every sort of ignorant neglect. He can perspire all day and sit at night among the family linen hanging on strings about his head, just conscious of discomfort in his wet shirt. He can live, spite of Sunday cleaning-up, in compacted dirt, inveterate, ingrained. He can eat, of mere custom,

coarse food to repletion every day. He can drink year to year a river of drugs. He can smoke a compound of fiery nastiness which might choke a whole street. I sometimes wonder what might have been made of such fibre, with decent care and some regard for that branch of science which our little school-people learn to worship, as per syllabus, under the name Ijeen.

It may be that country doctors have found it difficult to touch the mass of ignorant conceit, and the traditional sanitation ; but I cannot altogether hold them clear of neglecting the teaching side of their office. Admirably assiduous and widely accomplished as they are in the main, they ought, by this time, to have made more impression upon the destructive heresies of cottage nurses, and to have set up some standard of clean and sound living in that qualified state of health which the cottager desires. Our medical men, covering their large, scattered practices, riding far in wild nights, working hard for fees too often dubious, are in private sickness beyond praise : is it too much to ask for a larger recollection of public health ?

As I came home, the evening thickened, dull and still ; the time was one of those halting-places that come in the advance of every Spring. The wood was thick set with violets ; the red stemmed spurges were

uncurling ; here and there a solitary stellaria shone. As the light fades, a prevailing sadness grows upon the land, a melancholy which the cry of the plover beating up and down the field beyond the wood, seems to express. In the distance some one is calling the cows with that lugubrious "C'up, c'up, c'up," which is one of the twilight sounds. Then from over the hill a bell begins to toll for Arnington evensong, a thin wavering note on the moist wind, a voice which with all the sounds from wood and field, fold and yard darkening under the unfriendly night, "*paia il giorno pianger che si muore.*" It is the hour of introspection, doubts, fallings-from, all along a slow mile under the glooming wood. Then comes into sight my great elm, with one cheery starling bubbling and whistling his utmost at the top ; and next, the kitchen chimney already at work ; and for once the domestic reality routs the vague trouble of the mind. There are seasons when one's thoughts choke within four walls, and must fling out for life into the open air ; but there are times also of a lower unrest, exorcised, as now, by vows to Lar, by thought of the panelled corner where the Liber-proof hangs, of the shelf of the immortals, of the meal even—severe in matter, in manner perfect—now growing under faithful Lucy's hands. In my solitary evening walks

I often have recourse to this sort of spell. After reaching my farthest point and setting my face homewards, I let my mind run on before to the centre of all comings and goings, the covert and burrow of one's personality ; sometimes peopling the quiet rooms with faces and voices which never came there and never shall ; filling the prosaic corners with happy ghosts, who always vanish even while my hand is on the door.

16th.—Blackthorn winter, in half a gale from the north-west, and with now and again a spit of snow out of the hard-edged deep blue clouds. On such rude days conscience demands a sorting-up of tasks neglected ; and my forenoon went in works of necessity with barrow and spade, comfortless among the wind-thrashed wallflowers and strewn pear-blossom. At noon the sun struggled out, sending great spokes of misty light through the folds of the steely sky, and suddenly lighting up the orchard boughs, silver and gold against the gloomy north.

Conscience was eased after a morning face-to-ground and back rigidly bent, and I walked down to the village and aimlessly out towards the blank outline of Ockington Beacon. Two miles out, at Jolland's Corner, a vast triangle of waste common fringed at one edge with cottages, a sawmill, a coffee-tavern,

and an iron temple of the Particular Baptists, I met the Rector on his rounds and turned homewards with him. Years of acquaintance have never quite removed a touch of constraint I feel in his presence—something of an awkwardness one might show in converse with a courtly angel. He is so merely good, so wise by constant proof, so serenely above the common confusions of the world, that it is easy to believe he sees much which we surmise; “the secret of the Lord” is with him, if anywhere, assuredly. Everything of him, the fine-cut face and clear eyes, the cultured voice and grand manner express the clean strong nature wrought by long inheritances and experience to the height of human accomplishment. He is unfailing in his office and his visiting; his church is ordered in a rare mean of furniture and ritual; his sermons overflow with thought, streams of pleasant diction, deep as clear, yet never academic, always vital to the lowest mind: in handling parish matters, in the work of clubs and charities he is always kind, yet clear-headed and strong-handed. Beside him, the clergy of our country seem in general ineffective, to say the least. The several types are well represented in the deanery; we have the youngish ascetic, unfortunate in his physiognomy, whose experience of the world was gained at one of

the less exacting Theological Colleges, who empties his church on principle, by means of scaring innovations ; there is the aged B.A., withered and exhaust, mock-venerable with unkempt beard and bleating voice ; we have the good easy man, his own patron, who drives an admirable pair and confines his parochial labours chiefly to subscription-lists ; we have the essential townsman, broken down after an East-End cure, retiring to the repose of the rectory, about as well fitted to comprehend his flock as to judge stock and roots. On the other hand, the Rural Dean is a fine gentlemanly old cleric, an Oxford prizeman, a good horseman, tall and straight, silver-haired, working fairly well at his seventieth year ; others we know, obscure, middle-aged curates, young incumbents, zealous and not wholly unwise, who are for the most part very creditable to their order. But whether a parish be in a state of "high organization" or dead neglect ; whether the church be full or empty ; the character of the parishioners hardly seems to be affected. To outward appearance, at least, the flock seems to respond in a curiously small degree to the character and the works of the parson. In Arnington there are perhaps reasons in the Rector himself for the absence of any very noticeable elevation of standards. I can imagine that the constraint I have felt at times

in his presence must have its counterpart in many other of his flock. He is not to be ignored: that common relation of the country priest and the labourers is impossible here. The farthest outliers on the upland farms, the veriest lurcher-keeping ne'er-do-well, fall under his influence, and must feel too clearly that he belongs to a world not theirs; must know how he scorns the life they love. Such and such a course he holds to a hair's-breadth, such a threat he defies, such a slight he overlooks; not the most fervent charity will meet meanness or malice half way; and herein lies a strange natural check to the weight of a perfect example. He himself disregards what we call results, in the way of Band of Hope converts or offertory pence. His ideal of duty is shut up in his own thoughts. Only by long acquaintance I came to guess the immense solicitude for his people that fills him; to trace a not infrequent fit of gloom and abstraction almost terrible in its degree, or a humour of inward gaiety and intellectual *abandon* to some apparently small happening in school or cottage, evidence, to him, of rise or fall in the world of souls, his care.

A short time ago we had among us a clergyman whose vocation it was to conduct that sort of religious Blue-Pill called Missions, a thing imported, as I

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imagine, from the Methodist societies, and by them called Revivals. This gentleman was shocked by the lethargy of Arnington ; professionally, he observed an open door. "My dear sir, you have made no impression upon the people at all ! The place wants rousing, sir,—rousing ! These stagnant country parishes have really no chance ;" and so forth, and so forth. The Rector said nothing, but presently took the man with him on a long round of visits to the outlying farms and cottages, and brought him home silent and reflective, with a world of new light upon the matter of personal religion and pastoral methods ; with some perception, it may be, of the truth that roots work underground, and that there are means of influence to be found in a lifetime which are wanting to the programme of an emotional fortnight.

To-day, as we trudged along the somewhat dreary road, the wind harsh on our faces and the sky black before us, our talk ran upon the youth of the parish, taking as starting-point Henery Bish, whose two days' work in the garden were still raw in my mind. I found my conclusions from externals to be mainly right. Henery is a drone, of the stingless sort as yet, the Rector says. He has made some study of him, and thinks he would be consistently immoral but for general restraining funk. This holds good of too

many of the young men ; their law, surlily acknowledged, is the constable living in Wickens' Cottages, the gamekeepers who patrol the coverts, the military J.P. whose dogcart spins through the village on Bench days ; indolence and cowardice are the chief inward preservatives from actively vicious courses. The Rector admits all this and more, concerning the village proper ; but there is a large difference between the inhabitants of "the street," the five or six hundred souls between the Tanyard corner and the Mill brook, and the other odd thousand scattered among the farms and cottages in the outlying parts of the parish. In every way the outliers excel the street-dwellers ; the children are healthier and pleasanter to see, the lads and girls are steadier, the elders are incomparably more civil and sober-minded ; altogether it is a gentler race. To a twice-dipped Tory like myself, this of course is the remnant of the old order, still unsubmerged in cloacal overflow of these latter days ; the Rector, who must be called a Radical for want of a sweeter name, thinks it lies in the breeding. Out on the farms, in the little hovels of cottages that lie a mile up a wet lane all alone, there is often courtesy to be found very unlike the bald converse of the street. There the boys' "touch" and the girls' curtsy (this most effective when performed

by four or five in line) are not quite perfunctory ; the accompanying grin comes from the heart. The gamekeeper will stop to talk, with friendly salute ; and you find him equally free from any touch of servility or insolence, unassuming, with natural good manners. The labourers, hoeing solitary in the remote fields or lopping underwood by the roadside, answer the wanderer's good-day cheerily, neither forward nor sullen. But down in the village we are in evil case. At thirteen years or so the boys with great punctuality begin to "go to the bad." Good little boys they may have been till that climacteric—even good with the superiority of Sunday-school-book heroes ; but soon or late they become what the village calls "Radicals," and it is not a pleasant metamorphosis. They loaf most of the day at shop-windows and lane-corners ; the badge of their emancipation is the cigarette, which is fast displacing the bullseye in the small grocer's window. They avoid all appearance of work ; if caught and catechised on the subject, they profess a desire for a "place as house-boy," the small knife-cleaning job that entails kitchen fires and odd meals and large spaces of leisure, and leads to no permanent employ. A very few, possessing rigid fathers with conservative notions, are put to gardening or serving in shops.

Very rarely is a boy apprenticed to any trade now. After they are clear of the Standards, they hang about the street corners in all weathers, amusing themselves with language above their years, often horrible, with the sports of the season, whip-tops, or marbles, or catapults. The old people are never tired of expressing their astonishment at these manners. The middle generation, the fathers and mothers of the little revolutionaries, sometimes grumble and draw comparisons with their own harder youth ; but rarely attempt any sort of correction beyond an occasional "clip on the head," dealt in ill-temper, and understood in that light. The Rector thinks that the Day-school and the Sunday-school between them have destroyed the notion of parents' responsibility for their children's ethics. Those energetic institutions take so much out of the hands of the fathers and mothers that it is small wonder if the formation of manners goes with the rest. The result, in the case of the boys, at least, is disastrous. There seems to be no sanction under which to appeal to them, no respect save for the superior force temporarily on the side of Order. It is not pleasant to contemplate living among such beings in the grown-up state ; and I have sometimes seriously questioned whether that branch of

learning which makes a man a clean shot with a revolver may not prove profitable during the next few generations. The Rector never shuts his eyes to facts : even when arguing on the other side, he frequently presents me with evidence a good deal stronger than my own. He says that the boys are wholly without a sense of honour ; chivalry we should not expect, but there is not even fair play. When the Sunday-school-ma'ams explain that strength ought to respect weakness, the little tyrants are puzzled by the proposal to throw away a natural advantage ; and they continue to bully the girls, to mob daft people, to harry the brute creation without truce. Further, he says that even the virtues we judged traditional are dying out ; mere brute courage seems to be going. Many of the boys will not play football, for fear of knocks. Last Summer he took a boys' eleven over to a cricket match at Tisfield ; and as he had damaged a finger, asked for a volunteer to take his place as wicket-keeper. Not one of the louts would put on the gloves, from tenderness towards their knuckle-joints. And when they fight, there is no honest punching or wrestling, but preliminary hurling of flints or any missile that comes to hand, followed by a wild-beast worry on the ground, with tooth and nail, and inarticulate noises

of frantic rage. Such an encounter the Rector chanced on this afternoon, walking to Jolland's Corner, and dissolved with sudden stick. "They are going back to the monkeys," he says; "there will never be another Tom Sayers in Sussex."

To this *débâcle* of boy-nature there is a set-off in the more conservative nation of girls. These seem largely to escape the sort of distemper which takes the boys. Though in many ways they help to make the future troublesome, they are the most hopeful part of the coming race. Among the various deformities of face, the too common rickety and scrofulous subjects, there is a proportion of honest shiny complexions, of red cheeks and eyes speaking simplicity, modesty, pleasure in a friendly world, sufficient to save the stock for a generation or two yet. The decay in juvenile manners is by many people put to the account of the School. In a neighbouring parish to Arnington there is a village Board School, whose fruit, under the hands of farmers, small traders, and a local "agitator," might almost put us here in conceit with ourselves. The Tyefold Board is a dull, soulless machine, ill-compounded with party-economies and primary prejudices; the Master, a Lancashire man, almost unintelligible to his pupils, a specimen of the coarse, downright,

self-assertive North-country nature on its worst side ; absorbed in his own prospects, bounded by reports and grants ; ready with his brutal slash at every fine Gordian hitch of humours or chances. The effect of his handling upon the peculiar half-shy, half-sullen natures of the Sussex children is grievous. He might have made a pavior or a rivetter, under an able foreman ; as a teacher of the elegancies of the Code, as preceptor to some hundred opening intelligences whose qualities would tax the powers of a philosophic saint, Mr. Clegg is absolutely dreadful.

But here in Arnington, with our docile Managers, and the Rector to steer, we are not greatly superior in our results, after all. Our Master and Mistress are excellent people, who maintain their percentage without a touch of Mr. Clegg's tyranny. The reason lies in the whole plan of instruction ; in the rude wholesale classing, the mechanical methods, the ignoring of the element of personal character. Not to mention Mr. Clegg, our Mr. Attree is a melancholy instrument for the building up of a democracy. His mild lower-middle-class fundamentals, his modest capacities, which being superior to the grocer-boy destiny of his fellows, lifted him to a training-college and a painful science, deep in decimals and nibbling at French and the Gallic War ; what can they do towards the

foundations of life in the Arnington which is to be? What else than the moral wilderness we see could be produced by this small, smooth mind wholly taken up with the labour, week-end to week-end, of satisfying Governmental necessities in the way of Freehand and Mental Arithmetic? If we could have for our Masters and Mistresses persons uniting the acquirements of the average University Head with an eternal patience, an irresistible sympathy, and the insight into character of a popular Counsel at the Old Bailey, the mass of dead detail might be made to move, and some result of actual life might appear. Under the present conditions, young Arnington is being sketchily instructed in many branches of learning secular; a little Sunday catechism and hymn-book exercises vainly present the spiritualities in face of the overpowering workaday week; in the practice of life the children are their own masters, with a list to the worse, if list there need be, from the all too patent elder faults at home.

There are those (we have representatives of the breed in Arnington) who think that there is a necessary connection between compulsory schooling and a virtuous populace; that figures and reading primers naturally make for godliness. These people, perhaps, view the cottage interiors in Mill Lane as so many

sources of saving Democratic health ; this, and a good deal more, is implied at open-air meetings at Election-time. Even in saner hours one hears the labourers credited with monopoly in several branches of virtue. When the Rector says that there are only two or three heads of families in all Mill Lane and Wickens' Cottages who are consistently sober, I rashly take his word against the Progressive estimate ; and I recollect how Mr. Eliab Blaber, our village carpenter, builder, and undertaker, recently excused a delayed job by explaining, more in sorrow than in anger, that on a particular Monday morning there was not a man in his yard sufficiently the better of his week-end drink to go to work. What may be called moderate drunkenness is the general rule ; there are exceptions, in the way of fitful abstinence and paroxysms of boozing. What chance have the children in any training of morals, when the school-hours go over studies which are to enable us to best the crafty Germans, and the home-life is enlivened by father's varying states of beer ?

And it were well if only beer were to blame. The common cottage life is both dirty and unhealthy, dull and ugly. The old houses in the village have for the most part large rooms, if low ; they are nearly all "detached," with tolerable patches of garden ;

they were built, with their steep roofs of "Horsham slate" and central chimneys, to keep out damp and cold. The new cottages, built by speculators from Tisfield, and owned by two or three small tradesmen in Arnington, are detestable styces, with thin slate roofs, rubbishy doors and windows, and scamped brickwork ; externally, an educational power in ugliness which not twenty thousand Schools of Art could overcome ; internally, a dull horror with their unused front parlours, sacred to antimacassars and wool-works and the family Bible reposing cornerwise on the table. The small kitchen-living-room at the back, with an impracticable little range (charged extra in the rent), perhaps a copper as well, is often inhabited at one time by a family of seven or eight souls, the dinner a-preparing, and the week's wash half dried. Up the breakneck stairs there are two or three little bedrooms, stifling in summer, bitter in frost. The whole building, whether Jacobean or Victorian, reeks with a thick warm smell, compounded nastiness, preserved within well-closed windows, save in the full dog-days. There is small wonder that in these shanties of the Jerry-builder personal cleanliness is not much followed ; a comprehensive tubbing is perhaps impossible in a kitchen which is the common-room of the house. In this matter the old

cottages make no difference ; soap and water are hard to come by ; but I believe the experiment is very rarely made. Babies are tubbed somewhat severely till they reach the knickerbocker age, when they gain their freedom, and thereafter exhibit the "low water-mark" conspicuously between collar and neck, below which soap seldom descends in after-years.

The catalogue of vulgar errors would in its entirety fill two or three walks from Jolland's Corner. We had reached the hill which descends into the village while the Rector was giving instances of the miserable unthrift which habitually squanders the ample wages in the fat summer time, and comes with pitiable messages through the sad-eyed wife when the first fortnight's frost has stopped work in December. And as we gained the foot of the street, we discussed the strange care with which "decline," or consumption, is preserved and propagated in the parish. In some fatal way the many consumptive stocks among us marry and procreate with zealous certainty. The blowsy, red-cheeked lasses may never so much as "walk-out" with a swain ; but if there is one whey-faced narrow-chested slattern more obviously a wreck than another, with half her relations in the churchyard from ancestral phthisis, she will be married

before she is out of her teens, and live to hand on the cherished plague. Dr. Culpeper can speak sternly enough when a patient with half a constitution is being asked in Church ; but nothing serves to turn the weedy girl or the rotten young fellow from the course which seems almost to be a tradition or a religion in our country, for the honour and increase of tubercle. Our people seem to think sound health a thing improper, if not almost impious ; and no one the least interesting or socially valuable who has not his proper disease, his symptoms, and his remedies to recommend him.

With such reflection on the ways of life in Arnington, tuned to the inert gloom of the afternoon, we reached the "twitten" or byway that leads to the church and the parsonage. Here I left the Rector, with the parish evils heavy upon him, and mounted the hill for home in the gathering dark. The wind had fallen, and in the dead calm there was some hint of amended weather to-morrow. I turned at the Tanyard corner to look back on the village, thinking of all the witless unnecessary wretchedness being contrived there ; but my mind was ready to throw off that solicitude, to guess at to-morrow's sun, to remember the white days—

"Fulsere vere candidi tibi soles."

I recalled the rich world, friends, books, the garden ; rebellious against vicarious unhappiness till I thought of the Rector, whose perpetual burden I had been fingering for an hour, and wondered if his consolations were so lightly found ; thence slipping into wider perspectives, which closed as I reached my door with inconclusive speculation upon the receiving of one's good things in one's lifetime, and some fixities connected therewith.

24th.—Two or three sunny days and as many warm nights have brought on the Spring past all account. Within a week, as it seems, the pears on walls or in the open quarters, widths and mounds of white hawthorn-scented knops, have succeeded the cloudy wreaths of plum and damson bloom as it faded into the light green of the spreading leaves. Oaks and elms are flushed over with a yellow haze ; here and there in southerly corners is a tree half in leaf. Spite of the exhilaration of this whole-hearted advance, one feels half aggrieved, as though the Spring had slipped in almost unawares and defrauded us of part of the accustomed pageant of entry. Swallows have been with us all this last week, trilling and twittering in the great apple tree near the lawn, making preliminary sweeps about last year's nests at the eaves ; as though no winter among Barbary

palms or Nile banks had come between. The cuckoo came on the seventeenth, a little late for the hurrying season. As a rule he is tolerably punctual to Cuckoo-Day, when the fabled old lady lets him out of the basket at Heathfield. The cuckoo's-mate calls his "ree—tee, tee, tee, tee, tee!" all day from the orchard trunks. Nightingales are reported; but nightingales are too good to be taken on hearsay just yet.

There is a manner of holiday in the garden. The heavy work of getting in summer crops is nearly done, and we have broken the back of the potting and re-potting in the frames. There is less of planning and more time to admire. To-day is Alice's birthday; and in the afternoon we held a small commemoration, with tea in the garden. Alice came early, and employed herself in gathering by special leave, given to mark the day, an eclectic posy from the borders. Nearer the hour fixed in the invitations came Kitty Culpeper, a contemporary of Alice's in the village. She promptly discharged her attendant nurse and joined Alice among the flower-plots; where I presently saw the yellow head and the brown in close conference over an armful of pink and white tulips. The other guests arrived at the grown-up equivalent, on the other side of the

hour, to Alice's time on this side ; Mrs. Lydia from the Rectory ; Mrs. Kitty French, a neighbour of mine beyond the Common ; and her son Gervase, at Christ Church, who should have been back in St. Aldates, compounding between Lit. Hum. and Summer Term, but that a sprain kept him with us for a week beyond the vacation. Mrs. Kitty is a year or two younger than Mrs. Lydia, and pleasantly contrastable in many ways. She shows traces of having been very pretty, where there are signs in the other of more recondite beauty ; she is as delightfully unwise as her friend is memorably sage ; her prattling shallows are none the less silvery for the thought of Mrs. Lydia's quiet deeps. On that smooth brow, where the black-grey hair breaks irrevocably in little waves and rings, into those wide-set eyes—laughing, ever so little short-sighted—trouble comes rarely and not for long.

The tea-table was set on a small level semi-cirque of turf under the high bank that skirts the fir-clump ; a corner that treasures every sunbeam that falls, and is only uninhabitable on very sad days indeed.

Alice, as became birthday honours, poured out tea, with Kitty second in command. There seemed to be some sort of coolness between the two ladies ; but Gervase, who is of that nature which all dogs

jump up at, and all right children lay hold of by finger or coat-tail as may serve, divided himself so impartially between the pair that before the first buns were finished the breach was made up, and the wrinkles smoothed out of Alice's forehead. It was a joyous feast. What matter whether the tea-pot would pour when the spout had been decorated with blue-bells, or what the tea was like when cowslips were added liberally to the brew? What vast delight it was when a great old cuckoo flew just over our heads, vocal and visible; and what shrill chorus greeted a squirrel which looked at us from the top of the bank, and after rating us for trespassers on his bounds, raced away over trunks and branches! Too soon there fell a great silent discontent because nursemaids were seen afar; and earnest assurances that it was *quite* early, really, and that they hadn't seen all the pigs and only one of the calves, gained twenty minutes' respite; and with Gervase betwixt they went off to see the menagerie once more.

I sat in the sunny corner with the ladies, and we talked of gardens and gardening. Mrs. Kitty is "a great gardener;" one of the sect who are masters of everything in that science except a garden. These *soi-disant* hortulans are not uncommon; feminine for the most part; learned in all the books upon the

subject, in every name of all that grows, from England to Van Diemen ; they work, too, vigorously at times, with paraphernalia of aprons and gloves and knowing forks and scissors. But there is little or nothing to be shown for it all. In their conservatory you find a Maréchal Niel just green enough to support the armies of the aphis, a dozen sticky geraniums, some dead ferns, and a collection of relics, cytusus, indiarubber plants and cyclamens, bought in bloom at the door and lingering out a depressing life on the stage.

Your friend is very well contented, busily "damping down" with a beautiful new syringe, or trying the latest patented fumigator upon the fly. In the open garden, the borders are almost flowerless at any season ; you are shown with great pride some miserable little novelty or oddity in solitary state upon the barren soil. To the owner's eye all is beautiful. "I am going to make great alterations here next year ; I shall have all these beds turfed over, and roses all along here." And so the desert blossoms in the flutter-winged fancy of Mrs. Kitty and her kind. Or in less optimist hours it is : "Really, Wickens is perfectly hopeless. I *must* get a man who understands flowers !" or else the seedsman has been dreadfully unprincipled ; or the soil

develops stiff clay properties, and refuses to grow roses. But through every chance, these people are very happy; and that is more than some better gardeners contrive.

To-night Mrs. Kitty seems to notice some difference between my crowded plots and the tile-and-trellis features of the Gate House pleasaunce, and to want a little advice—a hint or two as to how the flowers here grow so tall and thick. Well, first of all, it means a good deal of hardish work; you ought to see me going my rounds in the morning, Mrs. Kitty. Short of opening the petals with one's fingers, one has to do everything for one's flowers. Then there is the grand rule: *Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow*. She smiles at me. "Of course you mean——" "I mean, Madam, precisely what I say! Procrastination is the soul of gardening. There is more than enough to be done in each day. Once, only once, in all my horticultural career, did I accomplish in a day all I had planned to do. Learn the art of Putting-off. Next, feed your family. Turn in and top-dress every year tons, *tons*, Madam, of good black hotbed stuff, three-quarters rotten, like bride-cake; of rich yellow turfs; leaf mould; beautiful red ashes from the rubbish fire. Then, keep away rakes and tittivations, and rough up your borders with that

admirable tool we call a shove-hoe. Learn to put on the ground all the plant life it will carry—nearly all flower gardens are short of flowers—all lawn, edgings, stakes, gravel, and soil. Dodge in your hardy annuals between your bulbs, and leave places for the tender annuals, phlox and asters, zinnias, nicotianas, which will overgrow the dead stems of tulips and daffodils. When you have done all this ; and discovered that there is one day of all the year proper for each several operation (not a day to be got from Almanacks, as our people like to have it), but one day between certain limits, eminently fit by weather and chance for the seed or the bud or the planting out ; and that to catch this perfect day you must keep yourself clear from entanglements of social engagements a fortnight ahead, and so forth ; and when you have learned all the intricate exceptions to the rules (and in gardening, rules are the exception) ; and when you are proof against disappointments very near heartbreaking—why, then you will be in the way to grow flowers.”

Mrs. Kitty laughs, smelling at the bunch of narcissus she carries. “If it really means all that, I think I would rather go on as I am. I suspect that for all you say, there’s a sort of luck in it. And you’ve got such a lovely soil ; haven’t you ? Now

don't you think if I sowed my front garden all over with quite common nasturtiums, it would look very nice, and save ever so much trouble?"

It would, undoubtedly; so we discussed that and other plans for adorning Mrs. Kitty's demesne; till the children came back from the farmyard and were shepherded homewards by the ladies, calling shrill good-nights from the turning in the lane which we call Good-bye Corner. After they had gone, I strolled round the walks in the glow of the quiet evening with young French. We listened to the blackbirds, to the starlings congregated at vespers in the great apple-tree, a score of them facing the sunset, getting out their music, their bubblings, hissings, clicks, and whistles, with mighty energy of wing-flappings and head-bobbings. Gervase thinks they are conscious humourists; that just now they are burlesquing the spring fervour of nightingales and thrushes and such poetic hearts. If not, he holds their intense ungainly earnestness as almost pathetic. Down in the copse below the meadows a blackbird and a thrush are singing amœbean strains, the rich *legato* warble of the golden mouth against the clear *vivace* call of the speckled breast. Then, as will happen, we tire for the sound of our own tongues, and leave the sundown wood-chorus for a rambling talk. Gervase, an old

admirer of Alice's, had been so taken with her ladyship's dignity that he almost grudged to make up the quarrel with Kitty Culpeper. She had told him, while Kitty lingered among the calves, how it all happened. They had been comparing notes about their dolls, and slid from dolls' names to their own. "She said she thought Mildred wasn't at all a nice name for a doll ; so I said, it was a great deal nicer than Kitty. And she said that Katherine was a real lady's name, and nobody who was nice was ever called Alice. So I said, 'Why, "Alice" herself was called Alice, and there couldn't be any one nicer than her, even if she wasn't *real*. And there was Alice in Dick Whittington, and in the May Queen in the poetry-book ; and I said nobody was called Katherine except Katherine Howard and Katherine Parr, and I'm sure they weren't really what you'd call *jolly* people.' Then she called me a pig ; and I said I should never speak to her again."

"I soon smoothed it over," says Gervase ; "but Alice was quite right about her name. It is the great English name ; the classics are full of it. 'Little Alice' in Tennyson's 'May Queen,' and Alice 'the Miller's Daughter,' and Alice in 'Queen Mary,' Coleridge's Alice du Clos, Fayre Alice in 'Willyam of Cloudeslee,' Alice in 'Henry the Fifth.'"

"Elia's 'Alice W——n,'" I put in, "and Alice Lee, Alice Bridgenorth, 'Old Alice' in Lammermoor."

"Alice Lorraine, and 'Sweet Alice with hair so brown,'" concludes Gervase; "and they all have a distinct sort of English sweetness, a sort of honesty and goodness and healthy affection in them all. Of course there are plenty of very nice Kates and Kitties; but then one can't forget Catherine of the Medici and the Russian person, and they weren't what Alice would call really *jolly* people."

We had come in our perambulations to a corner where a company of "snakeshead" fritillaries hung their checkered bells. I think not many Oxford men worth their battels could see them without recalling Ifley and Kennington meadows in the best of the year, the best of the years, perhaps. In my time, quite unlikely sorts of men used to pick bunches of the flowers, when the levels of grass burned like green fire, and the river flashed dazzlingly at the bend beyond. We would come up the tow-path with our spoils; they may do it still and find it pleasant, when the boat goes well, and the Schools are still afar, and people are coming up for the Eights. Gervase goes back into the thick of it all to-morrow; to see the golden fields and the twinkling stream; to rip his blade through along the

Willows; to shout cheerily across the quad; to saunter after Hall with soul at rest. He nods pleasantly at my fritillaries, and we pace on, talking of Oxford—an odd confusion of my antique memories and his keen present. Gervase has a compound nature; all the strength of youth which can back up a spurt or draw a tutor, together with the spirit which even in stress of Schools, loves books, philosophises a little, and keenly perceives and enjoys beauty of outward things. He will take his Second in Greats, and probably end in the Civil Service, with a little reviewing, perhaps even an occasional slim volume of verse.

He accepts the forecast; but demurs to the volume of verse. "I don't take it as seriously as that," he says; "I only experiment a little in rhymes and metres, and so on. I think, now inspiration seems to be fairly dead, we might give rather more time to perfecting the form. If Laureates write rot, they might at least contrive with a little practice not to get the stress on the unaccented syllables all over the place. We ought to let the sense go for a bit (it would be a great relief all round) and try for sound, where we might do something. I'm sure there's a great deal to be done with alliteration—I don't mean the—

‘Tangled in toils of your tresses
And fast in your fringe’

style; something a little more recondite. There’s any amount of it in all good verse, but you have to look for it. And then there’s what you may call ‘half-rhymes,’ like that in the ‘Lady of Shalott’—

‘Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly.’

And then there’s repetition, and antithesis of sound, and recurrent vowels, in Coleridge’s way; and all sorts of small elegancies like that.”

I suggested that he should give me a sample of his ideal verse; whereupon he recited the following doggerel, or something like it—

“On the land of the semi-detached
The Spring has made sweet seizure;
The gate of the blowing South’s unlatched
And noon’s a golden pleasure,
Good for marking the almond-blossom
Light in light on the liquid azure,
Bees a-sprawl in the crocus’ bosom,
Sparrows sparring or matched.”

“Something like that,” he says; “no fine thoughts to disguise the workmanship. And on this plan, you can make as much out of the Green Park or

Hampstead Heath as out of the Isles of Greece, or Camelot, or any mortal place."

"People don't seem to realize," I answer, "how much all true poetry leans on mere natural phenomena. Modern poets crowd into London, and so miss their small chance of doing decent work. Think how meaningless a deal of Tennyson or Shelley must be to an ordinary London intellect."

"Yes," says Gervase; "but even down here in Sussex a man could not honestly set up to write pastorals or meditate the Country Muse. Honestly, what heart could one have to versify about the landscape while you can hear the Brighton expresses at five-minute intervals, and know that only a few miles away there is the embankment, and your scarecrow station and the advertisements in the meadows—Buggin's Bile Bolus and Sigger's Scari-fying Soap—and the rest of it?"

I resent this attack on our rurality. "There's no railway on *that* side," I point out.

"No; only a view of a lovely corrugated iron roof, and the Major's other improvements to his buildings for the new tenant. Then there's the brook there—it ought to have pound trout in it; but the Tisfield gasworks run their filth into it, and there isn't a fish in it these five miles. And there's a jolly little

sawmill at Blackhatch, you can hear it all day ; only it doesn't matter so much, because it sounds just like the baa of a Spring lamb. And your blessed metropolis of a village, with its progressive tastes ! I was out in the woods last night, to hear the nightingales—no, *not* sonnetteering—and there was an infernal steam-circus with an organ in full blast down on the Green, and a rifle gallery. The wind was that way, and a damnable waltz with a wrong note every third bar got into my head ; and I had to give up the nightingales and go home to bed. A man who wants to put nature—English nature—into verse, must shut one eye and ear at least. At the present rate of things, we shall have to stick to classical models before long, and take to Pope again."

After this we slip away into Oxford matters ; the Dean, a certain Proctor, Vincent's, Mr. Spooner's latest, Abel Beesley, some new skiff-riggers, Mesopotamia ; and come back to a light-hearted comparison of Horace with Catullus as a metrist ; when Gervase finds it is perilously near dinner-time, and rushes away in the midst of

" Saltuumque reconditorum
Amniumque sonantum."

I am left to go over my far-off terms, touched into

life by Gervase's warm-blooded actualities ; and once more to marvel at the hopes and propositions held in those threshold days ; hopes which, I suppose, to such of us as have not become bishops or members of Parliament, or popular novelists, are among the most sadly-humorous things in the world.

I paced round the long island of flowers under the fast-thickening dusk, and came to a stop again by the group of snakesheads. My scout used to tell me that it was impossible to get them to grow away from Oxford ; I learned to rank that with Thomas' other many inventions, so soon as I became a gardener. But to-night, after the late ruminations, and with clearer recollections of the Iffley fritillaries, I can believe that he was right after all. These are not the Oxford sort ; the kind I knew has been extinct for a definite number of years. Thomas builded his fiction better than he knew.

I was drawing towards the house, signalled by the candle-light in the parlour window, when a low churr came from the apple-tree as I passed ; and as I softly came to a stand in the grass, close overhead broke out the voice of the nightingale. Year by year it comes as a fresh miracle, never staled by use, never fallen from the height of younger memories. There is no voice like it ; the volume, the force, the liquid

falls, the purity, the ringing brilliance of it; its variety and depth; more than all, those marvellous stealing, swelling, dwelling, long-drawn notes, the only *crescendo* there is in bird music. All go to make the first nightingale's song a mark, perhaps the clearest, in the calendar of the natural year. There are some human voices which recall the quality of the sound—not those of the concert-room race.

She sings on—Philomela for ever, in spite of all miserable naturalists—a song and then a silence, to make the next strain the sweeter; until another voice from beyond the firs shrills in her pauses; and soon a third comes fainter from the copse below the meadows. All night they will sing; and to-morrow forenoon or afternoon, the woods will hear them through the daylight din of thrush and blackbird, finch and wood-dove, till darkness brings silence for the tireless song. I listen long, then shift a cramped foot, and she hears me. She scolds for a moment with a harsh, croaking note, and after a minute's silence I hear her beyond the garden begin again that irresistible stealing sweetness; and not to listen all night I turn to the lights of the house, questioning whether Gervase French might not draw some science of prosody from that chant, or whether the passionate air did not rather belong to the old days, when

versing was more than a parquetry of words, more than an echo out of all the Classics ; to the days which will come again, when plenary inspiration shall be required and found in all who sing.

May 1st.—Mayday, by the almanack ; but it is vain to try to conjure the life of the old festival into the common air. It was not so hard to do, even in days which I can remember ; when Mayday implied holiday and rambles flower-gathering, and the arrival at the house-door of little rustics with their May-boughs, devices in the pale harmonious colouring of the season—lilac, cowslip, orchis, bluebell—displayed with smiling pride and the traditional chant in honour of Garland Day. To-day is as lovely as any in the early Mays ; glistening clouds draw through the blue which is deep ultramarine at the zenith, turquoise near the verge ; clouds which lay belts and isles of shadow across the leafing woods, barring the distance with palest green and russet purple. The hillside over against my own, with its larch plantations and oak shaws, looks as though a dusty yellow or pale emerald had been “scumbled,” as a painter would say, over the soft brown and silver-grey groundwork of the woodland. Light is vivid and air is buoyant ; the day is perfect ; but the keeping of it seems to

have gone by. In the whole morning but two little companies of garland-bearers knocked at my door for the customary pennies. They had no song; the wreaths drooped dismally, having been made overnight, not in this morning's dew. The flowers were hidden under a clout, only withdrawn on receipt of coppers. One wreath made of crossed hoops covered with blue-bells and cowslips had a small doll sitting at the intersection of the circles—a relic, perhaps, of older imagery. One of the children told me his granfer used to be Jack-in-the-Green forty years ago, and he likes them to go round. Altogether it was a depressing visit; and perhaps the custom would be better extinct, with that other of carol-singing at Christmas, an even unhappier pretence.

Considering these pretty superstitions giving way before the present manner of Progress (which the County Council's great steam-roller seemed to typify for me, as it puffed and growled over the Arnington road, a peremptory macadamiser), I fell into one of those idle fits which are best suffered to tire themselves out. About noon I betook myself to the little oak copse which stands below the red stems of the fir-clump, where the thick underwood opens at one or two places upon noble prospects both to north and south. I always feel, on entering a wood, some

touch of the stillness and gloom of an old church ; but to-day the ever growing and fading gleams of sun, and the din of an army of finches in the tree-tops, made the little thicket less reverend than gay. I sat down on a drift of leaves under a bank, looking out to the hills in the north, and let the senses work, the mind slackly following. Chaffinch and greenfinch and woodlark answered one another incessantly ; now and again from further holts came the cuckoo's notes, or the clap and crow of a cock-pheasant. Once a swallow shot through the little clearing, trilling the song which, excepting the shriek of the swifts in chorus, seems the fullest expression of joy in liberty and motion. Then the breeze gathered and soughed through the firs behind me, a crescendo murmur, travelling through the clump ; the breeze which in the Purgatorio—

“ Di ramo in ramo s'accoglie
Per la pineta, in sul lito di Chiassi ; ”

“from bough to bough,” with Dante's exquisite notation of nature. The farthest ridge of the distance with its keen-edged clump on Camp Hill, showed aerially blue ; between that and the foreground incessant change worked. Here a cape of woodland flushed out into clear yellow under the travelling ray ;

here a slope of meadow faded into dusty blue-green ; here a rounded swell of plough-land showed pale pink or dull purple. Sudden touches of more vivid colour gleamed out, a rape-field, a willow-plot, a white cottage. In middle distance the oaks displayed tawny brown, green bronze, or brass-yellow, as the light shifted. The old white horse, feeding in the first meadow beyond the brook, was a dominant point of colour in the whole picture ; and the cowslips in the grass just beyond the wood had their part in the concert.

After a time the endless changes of beauty seemed to weary the perception, which, as it were, flags and fails from the necessary keen vision of mind. I moved across a bed of bluebells to the southern side of the wood, where a gap opened over the Weald and the Downs. The long grey wall of chalk-hills closed the view ; below it rolled the landscape in wooded promontories and islands ; right beneath me lay the little cluster of roofs, the spire beside its black yews, the brook-poplars, the smoke drifting in a light haze from the chimneys of the street. Sounds came to me here on the height ; faint cock-crows from a score of farms ; the thin clangour of the church clock—a peaceful lenitive chime ; the clink of the smithy. I could hear the alternate rumble and silence as the

carrier Veness made his calls in the street, changing presently into a steady trot as a little cloud of dust travelled up the rise beyond the village, and the piebald gelding was off upon his weekly journey to Lewes. Next there was an outburst of treble shouts and cries, faint and far away, and I knew that the school was up and the boys were pitching their stumps on the Green for the midday cricket. A fitful Babel continues till a shrill bell—a strident modern call, not the mild harmonics of the church tenor—quelled the din, and rang the strays back to their forms and slates again.

As I looked at the roofs below me, wavering in a steady shimmer of heat, I forgot the reeking bars where the men drank the heavy morning beer ; forgot the mingling smells of Hobden the butcher's new-painted shop ; the grocer's boys tugging their baskets to the side-doors in Prospect Place. It looked from my standpoint too pretty and simple for anything but rose-covered porches, virtuous labourers in knee-breeches and buckles, and the rural fair with side-ringlets and tiny pointed slippers. A stranger looking down from the hill-top on such a day as this might well think he had reached the Happy Valley. And even I who know can for a space exorcise from the lovely precinct the

painful, unseemly, base life which fills it in waking hours.

The sun flushed upon the long woods above the village and drew the eye away to the level edge of the Downs. It was all endlessly beautiful ; but I found once more the recompense I have learned to look for in any *deliberate* regard of natural beauty. The sudden flushing of sunset, a chance view during a journey, leave only memories of delight ; but when I go in search of beauty of earth, wilfully sit down to receive its impressions, always there grows in the end a melancholy as of loss and departure, helpless, most irrational, but, I believe (as with the wild irrational happiness of dreams), going down to the deeps of our nature.

One o'clock of this idle day goes by the church. I think of little Alice, down at the Rectory, who has by this time escaped from the Kings of England and is no doubt bouncing her ball against the back of the stables. I think of Gervase French, who, no doubt, is leaning out of his window to call to some one in the street, plans for going down to Sandford in a canvas pair ; while lunch is replacing gown and note-books on the table behind him, and across the gay street he sees some corner of Bagley, shimmering in the sun. I think of old Tomsett, straightening his

legs on a warm hedge bank, and fumbling for his bread and cheese and flat bottle. All reprove my otiose mood. I move so as to get a better view of the patches of colour in the garden, seen between the fir-trunks ; and while I look at the smiling oasis I count seven of the tufted parachutes of the dandelion sail by me from the meadows, which of late were golden all over with the flowers, into the parterre and the herbarium. To-day the feathery globes are scattering far and wide, pledges to the gardener that wholesome work in grubbing of leathery taproots shall not fail him hereafter. To-morrow I will certainly have a turn with the spud ; to-day is sacred to the contemplative life.

In the afternoon I made a visit to the master of Lycetts Farm, one John Avery, an agriculturist of seventy-five, roundly prosperous in the midst of the decaying industry ; with whom I have occasional commerce of poultry-sittings or cider, and also, I think, of feeling, in our common, well-developed natural Conservatism. Lycetts Farm stands low and close, as do nearly all the old foundations in our country ; you hardly see, till the last turn of the green cart-road opens out the farmstead clearing, its four fine chimney stacks, warm red-brick walls, and long roof of " Horsham slate," the flat cleft sandstone, graduated

from small squares at the ridge to broad flagstones at the eaves, best of roofs in cold or heat. The yard rises from sallow-planted bottoms, by grassy mounds and pits which in ampler times were the fish-stews of the mansion ; there is a little lawn before the door bordered with pansies and pink daisies. A vine straggles over the broad base of one of the chimneys ; a yew half buries another and reaches out over old garden-walls, where fig-trees and pears show vast boles and a thicket of shoots.

The heavy oak door was wide ; and I found Avery sorting out garden-seeds in the kitchen. When Lycetts was Twyhurst, a house of the great family of the Beres or Beers, who made themselves places in three counties, this kitchen was the hall. It has yet the great chimney-breast and open hearth, where an armful of sticks smoulders between the dogs, and a black pot hangs from the bright steel crane or rack on the chimney-back. Something remains of the old paneling, faded and patched. Overhead the iron hooks along the black timbers tell of ancient provision. Out of the kitchen winds a broad staircase of solid balks of oak, guarded at the foot by a massy trap of the same timber, which when down and sparred across would defend the upper stories, if the outer doors were forced in a siege. In the middle of the great room

sits Avery, an odd figure, dark-faced and keen-eyed, clad in torn and dirty frock, quaintly reigning among all these remnants of consequence and country state, and these solid comforts of the modern farm. As I came in, old Tomsett, who does odd jobs in the farm, hobbled in from the back passage with a message from the fields about mangold seed. The master gave his orders, not unkindly, but with the touch of superiority inevitable perhaps from a man who has both with honesty and credit made himself a place in the world, to his fellow who, after sixty years of work, is something less than when he began. Avery began at the bottom of the hill, and found rough places enough ; but to-day he is his own man, a person in the parish, well-to-do, safely planted beyond any thought of the Union or the Court. I know him for a clear-headed, well-balanced old man, whose bank-book is no idol to him ; who can turn at times, with no touch of unreality, simply and gravely, to matters which should grow into a man's last decade. From his original eighteenpence a week as carter-boy he rose by steady work, steady as poor Tomsett's, but ordered by strong will and foresight, to "good money ;" he kept his savings ; married prosperously ; ventured when the chance came on a little farm. He taught his boys to be worth a couple of labourers

apiece ; his wife worked tirelessly for the house. When things were ripe he moved to Rispham, and did very well with Southdowns. At last he came to Lycetts, and settled down to end his days on the hundred and thirty acres of middling land, content with fortune, and recognising easily the limit of his affairs. No less in secure middle age on his own farm than in the up-hill years when he gathered other men's harvests, he worked as few work now. Since rheumatism cut him down at seventy, he makes shift to hoe among turnips, propped between the hoe and a stick, or to look after the horses. But it is not much more than a formal defiance to idleness ; four sons, tall men whose worth is not to be calculated in terms of the ordinary labourer, live in the house and keep the land "like a garden." "Good boys, they are," says the old man ; "I allas know they'll do just what I tell 'em. I does without any odd man so long as I can ; you can't put no trust in 'em. That's half why farmin's as bad as it is ; there's not what I call honesty ! There was a fella I turned off last year, he was tellin' them in the publics down in the village how he'd been makin' a fool of me, and what he got out of the place. They han't got their hearts in the work, not in no sense, like. They must be right *here*," he says, laying a

gnarled fist on the breast of his ragged gabardine. "When I was a boy, they'd tell us we wasn't to knock off till we could see to count three stars a-shinin'; but, bless you, the chaps nowadays, they'd rather go by their watches. They're a shacklin' lot, that's what *they* are! Now, my boys, I reckon they sees a good many stars afore they've done some jobs, and it don't look as if it had done 'em much 'arm."

Here Mrs. Avery interrupted us with preparations for tea. She is a short, black-haired woman, some ten years younger than the master, a little hard-faced, and keeps on guard with the world. She rules the house nobly, with painful cleanliness and plenteousness of all manner of store, seconded by the eldest son's wife, a plain girl with a face of immovable goodness and the spirit of work in her strong shoulders and red wrists—a girl after the mother's own heart, grappled to her soul by the silent communion of righteous, unrelenting labour week to week about the dairy and the henhouse and the drying-ground. While Mrs. Avery stirred up the stick fire and measured out the tea, she spoke about the third son Albert, very much as though he were a boy at school. "Jus' like a pookin' cow 'e's bin all day. D'y' 'ear, father? All along o' somethin' Steve Wickens was a-tellin' him las' Sat'dy down

in the village. Oh, it's the gells, is it? Who said it was Liza Packham? That's jus' like you; 'spectin' the fire to draw afore the chimley-back's half warm like. I says to Albert, like that I says——" Here the entry of the daughter-in-law, who bears the amazing name Deidameia (a not uncommon name here, pronounced Dedemiah, and probably taken to be Scriptural), stayed the further enlargement of the secrets of the house, and left me able to talk with the old man again. He affords a good instance of the fair-minded way nearly all the old men have in looking back; he seems to see with equal clearness merits which ended with his boyhood and those which came in with the last Ministry. In all this there is, of course, room for healthy grumbling; and just now he was complaining of the vanishing of the old "round frocks." He hardly knew where to get one now. "Won'erful good they was. They'd keep out rain better nor any top-coat; and that warm acrost the chest again the wind. Chatfield in Lewes, one time he'd women all over the country makin' on 'em for him; I don't expec' there's many could put one together now. And look at long leggin's! Everybody used to wear 'em—right up to here. There was old Jack Comber had a little tanyard clost against where the schools is now

down at Rispham; an' when I was a boy, I'd take the leather into Lewes every Saturday, for his sister to make up; and at Christmas-time, he'd give me a pair o' leggin's, made just as I liked, brass buttons and all. Jack *was* a man, he was. He used to live over by Steyning, afore he come to Rispham; and he'd often tell me about the smugglers. He was ploughman in those days, and after he's done his day, he'd walk over the hills to help get up a lot o' sperrits. Well, the smugglers they'd give him a keg o' gin now and again; and he'd allas fill his bottle out o' that, and take it with him in the field, ploughin'; an' he'd get through his bottle in the day. I asked him once if he didn't put no water to it? 'Water?' he says; 'not unless it was uncommon hot.' And he'd do his day's ploughin', and over the hill again at night to the smugglin'. There's not many men 'ud do the like of that now, would they? They was stronger then, an' rougher too. The men on the farms was terrible hard sometimes on the lads. When I first went as carter-boy, I never had a misword from the carter but once, an' then I deserved it. The carter-boys used to be beaten cruel, sometimes—mos' generally. The second place I was at, the carter was a rough 'un. Once we was ploughin', and he told me he'd kill me. He

says, 'You come here!' but I kep' on a standin' and wouldn't go; but at last I saw he was a-comin' to me, so I went; an' he says, 'Take my hand,' he says; so I took it; and he says, 'If you don't drive better I'll kill you.' Next time we stopped, he says, 'You'd better say your prayers;' so I said 'Our Father' out there in the field. I *was* frightened, I can tell you. Next time I took hold of the horse's head all the way, because I really thought he'd kill me. He lost his place after that, not over me, but about beatin' another boy. Ay, they was rougher then than they are now. That was when the Horsham Gang went on. There was a lot of 'em; they broke into houses, but never hurt nobody. Police? There wasn't any then, but only beadles and constables. At last the gentry got a man to go in with 'em; and they didn't take to him, not at first. After a bit they did, and he let on them, and they was taken, one here and another there. One was hung and the others transported. But the man who did it, he had to fly the country."

The clatter and clink of the horses being brought round to the yard made old Avery hobble to the door to inspect them; and when he came back to his chair, he had something to say about the disappearance of oxen for the plough. Here and there they

may still be seen, chiefly in the more sequestered parts of the Downs ; but practically the plough-bullock is extinct. "'Tis a pity," Avery thinks ; "there's never such beef as they bullocks made when they'd been worked and then fatted. They *was* goin' out ; but I think as how it was the cattle-plague as made people give 'em up, mostly. I rec'lect when that first come ; we'd only horses then, an' it took them. When I brought 'em in one night, Master 'e says, 'You've got to be a bit more careful with the whip, my lad ; you've been hittin' this one in the eye,' he says. Well, I'd laid the whip on a lump o' dirt when we first went out, and never touched it all day. When we got the horses into the stable, my mate says, 'Hold on,' he says ; 'here's the other eye wrong !' And so it was. And the same night I was goin' acrost the meada and I fell over a cow and kicked her ; but she never got up ; so I says, 'Bring a lantern, Jimmy,' I says ; 'there's something wrong with one of the cows.' He got a light, and sure enough she was dead. They all had it after that. We went over to Tisfield for the farrier, but we only lost that cow, and none of the horses. Seemed as though the hard stuff in the roof of their mouths came off, and then they got better."

Nowadays we have the Agricultural Depression with

us ; but we do not find our cows in the dusk dead of the quick mysterious plague, nor are the carter-boys half-murdered in the lonely fields. Avery seems to perceive compensations in everything ; I do so myself under certain conditions, but partially. I fail to see the make-weight in the modern farmers, the frequenters of the Griffin at Tisfield on market-day, for the loss of the touch of refinement and courtesy, the observation and the centred mind of Avery. As I rose to go, the old fellow was full of delighted praise of the quality of the air and the water at Lycetts. The old folk notice such things, with much accuracy and appreciation. "A beautiful water," "a rare fine air," are niceties which our friends in the covert-coats and riding-breeches, the brewer and the broker who farm, fail to take into account ; possessions which, with a hundred others, are not the less real because they are rare. The Rector connects them with one of the Beatitudes, confessing himself to be without the qualification that inherits so largely.

There are days of March when few things are better for a man than to get under the lee of a big hayrick, stamp his heels in the litter, and set his nape well into the overhanging wall ; while the mixed sleet and dust whirls past the corner of the rick, let him in the warm lull of the sheltered air pull a handful

of the hay and smell it; half the spell of June is in the grey fibres; he can almost hear the blackbirds on the wind; if by chance the cowman should begin to sharpen the hay-knife behind the rick, he hears the clink of the scythe in the shimmering fields; the essence of summer is laid up in the heart of the hay. Something after this fashion I find in talking with old Avery. There is a kind of laid-up sunshine in his nature, a quality impenetrable by winds of fortune, which makes him a shelter for others on bleak days. I wish it were given to more of us so to stack our Midsummer grass, that it will make pleasant corners for windy weather, and cut out sweet and wholesome to the last truss when the scythes swish again through the sorrel and the dog-daisies.

22nd.—Last night we had rain, after a grievous drought which entirely spoiled the transition from latter Spring to Summer. For a month past the glass has dropped and risen, the wind has gone about from raw north to sweet south, every shape of cloud has loomed and melted; the cockchafers have held their yearly one night's festival; sooty airs have pervaded the house, and candles have sputtered o' nights;—without bringing the desired showers. It is heart-breaking work to watch the windward from hour to hour; to see the promise of the airy wisps

rise only to vanish ; to try to find comfort in sunrise or sunset. The restless wind swept the sky clear of the last thread of vapour, and left a grey-blue vault from which the sun shone with July face. The light was broad and colourless, the heat dry and untempered ; and the latter Spring became a desolation. All vegetation suffered ; the breeze which all day sucked the moisture from the roots, blew keen under the stars, and the frost bit just before dawn in the lower plots and unsheltered corners. Leaves lacked the moist, crude green of Spring ; grass yellowed ; the apple-blossom fell almost as soon as it opened. Pæony blooms were but half-grown, and strewed their petals all too soon ; delphiniums were climbing inches every day, hurrying out their flower-spikes, pushing on with the rest to bloom and seed, forced by a dry root-run. Insect pests made the most of the dry chill weather ; rose-grub and caterpillar meshed up and gnawed the leaves of the Perpetuals ; greenfly mossed over the lustiest shoots with their serried host. As a balance to this, the slugs and "shell-snegs" were laid close in tufts and clumps of the borders, and the daintiest seedling was safe in the midst of the dusty soil. Weeds, too, suffered ; an hour's skimming of the surface with the hoe made havoc with the persicaria, goosefoot and fumitory,

the eternal dandelion and groundsel which infest my quarters—"a legacy," as Ministers say of a deficit, "from my predecessors"—former tenants, who let the weeds run knee-high, and left a sufficiency of wholesome work to any reformer there might chance to be among their successors.

After mornings among the hydra-heads of unnecessary vegetation—sow-thistle, mallow, chickweed, plantain—it became easy to slip out of tune with all the life which worked and rejoiced in the flaming afternoon ; with the starlings sliding on their incessant journeys to feed the shrieking nestful in the roof ; the swifts balancing and cutting superb curves high up in the blue ; the myriad flies that made the air glitter with their jerking dance ; the innumerable bees whose steady bourdon, a little sharpened or flattened from one note from moment to moment, hummed about the white blossoms of the holly-trees : all these were too light-hearted for the soul whose labours, spite of the forlorn pretence of the water-pot, were slowly coming to nought in the disastrous weather.

Last night closed in with hazy drifts about a blood-red sun, without a hint of change. Then, in the small hours, when we were all asleep, a quiet rain began ; the great watering-pot was swung impartially and completely over all, and we woke to find the

world already fresher and greener, the course of the year set going the old way, and a rich atmosphere steaming up from soil and leaf. The morning was still and grey, under vast formless folds of vapour ; the unseen sun, striking through these, turned the world to a great glass-house. In the refreshed peace of the day the long-delayed businesses of the garden prosperously unrolled themselves, to the monotonous purr of a dove in the fir-trees, that most domestic-soothing of woodland voices. Bish, working "strip-shirt" amongst the peas, I heard whistling now and then in a furtive manner, showing thus unwonted contentment in the favouring season. At times the day gloomed somewhat, and a cloud of dusty rain trailed up our hillside and drifted through the firs—a wet mist that pleasantly dewed the face, and refreshed the stocks and the asters planted out to replace flowered-out wallflowers and forget-me-nots.

Callers arrived in the afternoon—Mrs. Lydia bringing her niece Margaret Fletcher, and Mrs. Kitty with a Miss Cottingham. Margaret spends some summer months each year at the Rectory, and is of old an associate of the inner circle with Alice, Zero, and the rest. Helen Cottingham is a new-comer—an artist staying in the village to paint landscape and country models, as a change from the life-school and

the St. John's Wood associations. As we sauntered round the garden, the two girls presented a very pleasant difference of good looks. They are both a bare twenty. Margaret is something tall, round-armed, βαθύκολπος, with a fine poise of the head, grey eyes looking very straight out of a sunburnt face, dark brown hair wound voluminous in shining braids. Helen is a head shorter, slight, with childish hands ; her face defying all superlatives in dark blue eyes, pathetic, gay, unfathomable by fits ; cloudy hair no nameable colour but beautiful ; dog-rose bloom of the cheek ; all the inexplicable differences of curve and angle which make the features of regnant Beauty.

The clouds were breaking out in gaps of moist blue, and the sun flushing over the dripping woods, as we made the tour of the garden to inspect the iris-beds—blue German and pearly Florentine, and all the bronze and mauve and yellow glories—Hortense and Alfred Fidler, Queen of May, Victorine, Nancy, and the rest—and the pæonies, laying their great heads about the borders, fading from crimson to pink and white. Miss Cottingham, with her head a little on one side, and one eye shut, regards what she calls a “perfect bit”—a group of iris backed by the dark of the clipped yew and the grey and golden lichens of Pomona, the broken-nosed garden goddess

half hidden in the hedge. Besides these came a middle distance of variously gleaming border, closed by the tangle of apple boughs and spaces of turquoise sky. When we left this enchantment, another subject opened itself—the fir-clump with one shining cloud entangled, so it seemed, among the dark-tufted branches; the lower sky clear between the shadowed stems; and all the slope of the garden falling from the foot of the wood in vivid sunlight. Before the light shifted, the artist was framing between small fingers a width of aquilegias, a hundred soft and tender passages of rose, yellow, pale purple, and white, and uttering little explosions of appreciative delight. Margaret Fletcher, who does a little honest amateur water-colour work, followed her, rather puzzled by the superlatives, but clearly impressed by the fine technicality of the language.

Tea was set under the yew hedge, and Mrs. Lydia poured out. The talk was mainly artistic—Miss Cottingham in a pretty way teaching us the last conclusions of the London schools, and what they do at Julian's, and how her friends had been hung at Manchester or crowded out at Birmingham. All of us—except Mrs. Lydia—were attentive, as befits the shy amateur in the presence of the real artist. We all do a little in our own ways; Mrs. Kitty makes little

pen-and-ink caricatures which she calls "etchings ;" Margaret dabbles in water-colour ; I possess grounds and points, and a few proofs of ghastly first states. Only Mrs. Lydia has no gift in this kind. She would hang her rooms with grocers' almanacs just as soon as with Gainsboroughs, and could hardly distinguish horizontals from perpendiculars. I sometimes question whether there be some essence of lying in all plastic art, that we see so many wholly good and pure souls untouched by its appeal—something of the sort which banished *μύησις* from the Polity. Howsoever it be, Mrs. Lydia listens behind the tea-things to our debate, amusedly above us ; sometimes throwing into the discussion the clear dictum of the unprejudiced mind. Margaret, who was taught at school to mix "shadow colour," cannot see the blues and purples which Helen Cottingham tries to show her in the sunlit garden. I arbitrate (supporting myself against the weight of Slade Schools and Newlyn studios by memories of William Hunt and David Cox) to the effect that the colours are there, but that when once the eye has learned to see them, it is, save in the case of the great, sure to see too much, and to read into nature those dread anilines which invade the proprieties of the Academy itself. Miss Cottingham thinks we don't see half yet.

Margaret summarises, "You'll never make me believe in blue trees and a pink sky!"

After tea we adjourn to my little gallery; a few feet of dark panelling whereon hang the little Turner—a body-colour Venice something of the latest—two Prouts; a David Cox sketch of a storm; an immortal plain girl in a blue sash by Hunt; and a few moderns who have not yet "arrived." In their perfections both sides find the evidence they require. I suggest recourse to literary colourists. We discuss that touch in the Purgatorio where the shadow falls red on the white flame, and the parallel in the Ancient Mariner where—

"The charmed water burnt away
A still and awful red"—

two instances of colour-sight something like Turner's, certainly unlike many other people's. Then we come back to the *Commedia* for that deep paradox, which contains the whole matter, of the

"Troppo color vivo."

The elder ladies leave us to our argument, and retiring to the window at the end of the long room, discuss the vital necessities of the parish. I find myself engaged in a little war with Miss Cottingham on

behalf of my middle-aged ideals, and by way of carrying the fight into the enemy's country, lecturing her on the iniquities of modern methods in Art—how they all live together in limited quarters of London, painting professional models, and copying Manet's way or studying M. Besnard ; going into the country in the summer (here she makes me a fine curtsey), and sketching anything which reminds them of the Academy ; coming back to Campden Hill or Chelsea in the shortening evenings, running about to each other's studios to show their work ; making out of this more Academy pictures for next year ; and so on ; never getting any fresh fact or matter into the process—following each his own narrow line of subject—puppy-dogs, herring-boats, swamps, cottage interiors ; carrying on a regulation system, a routine as dead as Egypt. Miss Helen is beginning to crush me with inferences that my objections do not touch the younger schools—*her* school—and I am remembering the difference which one's standpoint makes, whether the road lies from or towards the sun, when Mrs. Lydia breaks in on our debate. Smiling at us with a look that in any one else would be quizzing, she stands by the piano and touches one or two chords pianissimo, her protest, and our signal at once to leave the strife. I

open the piano, and she sits down and begins one of Schubert's Vier Impromptus. There is nothing to debate upon in Mrs. Lydia's art, so long as she is playing; there is not time, till she has done, to think how perfect it is. When the last note is still, I fall into speculations concerning the distinction between music and art of form or colour; how the one sense, maimed and shrunken, exists with the other glorified. I remember the curious complexity of Mrs. Lydia's gift; how she seems to be free of the spell she lays on others, talking and laughing through the tenderest air, as though the fingers did it all; how she seems to have no choice, playing, often in incongruous connection, Chopin, Balfe, Schumann, Gade, Handel; how, the Rector has told me, she sometimes does not play for a month together, or only fingers over some trite hymn-tune in odd twilight half-hours, something reminiscent of child's Sundays, of Confirmation Day, perhaps.

After the Impromptus she played us a Chaconne and then a Minuetto; and as the pathetic recurrent phrase filled the quiet room, it was easy to understand the power of music, wider, simpler, incomparably more moving than the art of the eyes; easy to understand the cast of mind to which the matching of

colours and turning of lines must be a mean business at best. And before the last chord, Mrs. Lydia turned round with a laugh to Mrs. Kitty ; they really must go, and she would send the blankets (or some such parish paraphernalia) by the boy the first thing in the morning.

In the dusk I walked out northwards towards Sheringham, meeting the customary Saturday night procession of outliers coming down for their weekly shopping in Arnington, and the earlier buyers already going homewards. I overtook Mrs. Bish in her ancient black, a vast basket on arm, full of the Sunday's flap-of-beef, the half pound of tea, the currants, and the inevitable bottle of physic.

Then came several faces I knew, men from the nearer farms ; others that were strange, from the far corners of the parish—a little man, toothless and knock-kneed, with thin black beard and yellow whites to his eyes—two stout young men in tail coats and gaiters, one of these a very common type in Arnington, with white eyelashes and light bushy whiskers on his florid cheeks ; the other was playing an accordion, which, perhaps, on the whole, may be called the national instrument. After these came a farmer's girl, who might be of any age between twenty and forty, slight, anæmic, formless, dressed in a forlorn

long-waisted black jacket and draggled skirt. She wheeled before her an infant and an assortment of miscellaneous groceries in that comprehensive vehicle called a pram, and represented only too well the general young-womanhood of the parish.

I turned out of the road at Cudbridge and sauntered down a woodside where no marketers came or went ; and before long the gasps of the accordion died in the distance and left me to the hush of the evening, growing momentarily upon the wood. Then the night-jar began his drowsy burr, answered by another and yet another, until, relieving one another, they filled the twilight with an unbroken, monotonous drone. Close at hand, as I sat on the field-gate, small lives cricked and rustled in the hedge-bank ; three fields off I could hear the folded sheep munching, and the wavering bleat of a lamb. Then one or two premonitory churrs, and the nightingale broke out in magnificent song, pealing from a sapling almost within arm's length of my resting-place ; the song that never tires, as perfect a delight here on the edge of Summer as when it was new in the first days of April. She pours out air after air, separated by a breathing-space pause ; and, so far as I can judge, never repeats the same figure in the quarter of an hour I listen to her. I slip away at last without disturbing the diva, and lose the song

at a bend in the road ; indulging a fancy which sometimes comes in turning away from such a feast, from Mrs. Lydia's music, or from a rich sunrise, a fancy that the lost beauty will all be found again presently, to the note and the hue, in the centre wherefrom it is a vibration.

It was a very light and still evening, and the village street when I reached it was murmurous with a sauntering crowd, buying, gossiping at corners, dropping in and out of the public-houses, the Stand-up and the Crocodile ; a crowd happy enough in its own way, with the week's wages in hand and the Sabbath already begun. Some of the men are by this time washed and in their better clothes, recreating, like my friend of the accordion, who acts Pan to this Arcady for want of a better, and fills the street with jerky strophes. There are too many of the girls from the cottages, the order which does not "go out to service," the home-drudges and the "up-street" gadabouts, enjoying their principal promenade, strolling arm-in-arm deep in circumstantial secrets, or formed in line at the edge of the pavement to *badiner* with the contemporary youth, who balance on their heels in the roadway, spit, and exercise repartee, with minute-gun explosions of horse-laughter.

The shops are all aflare, doing their chief trade of the week. Outside the Crocodile an old fellow in a frock and a keeper-looking man in velveteens are holding each other by the shoulders, prosing low and affectionately in the earlier stages of beer. One or two labourers in shirt sleeves come from the allotments, wholesomely tired at the knees, no doubt, with a broccoli in a handkerchief for to-morrow's dinner.

The night scarcely deepens. A glow hangs over the fallen sun in the north-west, and the larger stars of the constellations are pale and clear. As I turn into my gate under the firs, I see Antares, winking hazy-red on the edge of an eastern cloud-drift, under the steady yellow lamp of Saturn. A landrail is calling his restless crake-crake from his wonted meadow, and I can hear the night-jars purring across the valley—two sounds which show beyond doubt that Summer is established.

June 6th.—The rain which fell ten days ago was all too little to help the garden ; and up to last night it was bitter drought with cloudless noons and keen nights. The roses were foul with vermin, aphids, caterpillar, "brocks" in their little tents of spume ; the Teas as usual escaping much that the Perpetuals suffer. Out

in the woods the oaks were being stripped by the green caterpillar ; some copses were as bare as though it were January. Nature was out of joint. The harsh, dry air seemed to suck the generous humours out of man, leaving him pithless and his works vain. The elder has been in bloom for a week past, and the rattle of the mowing-machines sounded all about the valley, but none of the good associations of hay-time were to be conjured up. By noon yesterday the barometer had crept down to "change," and the sky wore a hopeful look, even to the oft-deceived and sceptic eye. In the dull heat, vast fans of thin white cloud spread slowly out of the south ; along the western horizon lay a company of fantastic little tossed-up vapours, unquiet and thundery. During the afternoon a grey-barred canopy of cirrus rose very slowly ; and by sunset heavy black wreaths of cloud were drifting under a dome of thin ashen-grey. At nightfall I went up to the top meadow to watch the anxious course of things. The air was dead and heavy as I stood by the gate and looked over the cleared meadow, a grey-green, shadowless plane, sharply cut by the black line of the hedges and the solid darkness of the unstirred elms. Everything was oppressively quiet ; there was no motion save the slow shifting of the pendulous breasts of the clouds

overhead in deepening blots of gloom. Low in the south all was undistinguished grey, but for some faint horizontal bars of darker vapour. As I watched these a glint of fire, very pale and weak, more felt than seen, winked from under the grey streaks, and declared storm in the doubtful elements. After some minutes, while the clouds overhead massed themselves with imperceptible motion, the horizontal yellow flicker came again, repeated instantly by another gleam round in the west. Then in the hedge beside me fell a few large drops—slap, slap; and far off in the valley the wind began to sound in the trees. As I reached the house, after a hasty round of barn doors and frame sashes of late left wide, a rustling breeze drew all at once through the garden, bringing the rain with it in gusty sheets. For half an hour the lightning blazed through the steady fall, with that long pulsating flicker that turns all the streaming air to blue fire and reveals terrific cloud-scapes, mountains and cataracts of vapour tossed and writhing with the energy of the storm. One may generally foretell the severity of a storm coming on at nightfall by the frequency of the distant flashes, before the thunder is heard—what people call “summer-lightning.” In this case the thunder died away rapidly, the storm passing to the

westward ; soon the rattle of drops in the trees fell, and overhead a misty star looked through the thinning clouds. Southwards a broad belt of greenish sky opened out ; the disturbance was past, and all the rain which had fallen was barely enough to darken the dusty earth. Once more the gardener's patience must take up the weary weight of hope deferred.

The morning broke cool and clear ; the air was washed of all the late sultry fever. A thousand small white clouds sailed out of the south, sometimes falling into semblance of line and squadron, sometimes curling and rounding up their dazzling tops with a thundery threat, only to break down again into dusty wisps and fringes.

I determined to make a push with the hay. This week we have cleared the four acres next the garden—Cannon Mead, we call it—and the small piece behind the wood. To-day I propose to work late and finish the lower meadow along the brook. My haymaking is carried on in the old-fashioned way, spite of local doubts about my sanity. Hereabouts, haymaking is a lost art ; the ideal operation in Arnington is somewhat of this fashion : given cloudless weather, the grass is first left to stand and seed about a fortnight after it is ready to cut, from notions of getting a bigger crop ; then the machine is

run round the fields, and the scaler or tossing-machine follows. The third day, or even the second, if the crop is light, the hay is raked roughly into lines with the horse-rake and carried from the lines. Being thus about half-cured, it is stacked (wide and low, to save pitching up), and left to sweat and smoke and possibly fire. In perfect hay-weather this plan is just feasible, though a vile piece of scamp-work ; in most seasons it is calamitous. The scarcity of mowing-machines delays the cutting ; a day's rain saturates the uncocked grass ; and the hasty, careless operation breaks down, ending in a rick of grey, washed-out provender, not without its due effects in the ultimate eating. The tearing cut of the knives in the machine is a very different thing from the clean rip of the scythe ; and the older men are positive that where machines are regularly used, the *bottom* surely deteriorates.

When my meadows are ready, with due, but no excessive observance of the weather, I put in some half-dozen scythes, retained beforehand : Bish, who is a slow but very steady mower ; Lemuel Welfare, a terrible Radical, who does nothing all the year till hay-time, then works superbly and drinks in proportion ; Henry Awcock (which we call Awk), the Rectory coachman, lent for the business, a

man who loves the hay and considers the hay-making his yearly holiday ; a couple of odd men from the village, at other times a fettler and a hay-trusser ; and old Tomsett to swap round the hedges and clear corners. After the cutting, the swathes are properly turned with the fork ; and, as the weather serves, got into line, into small cocks, and in an ordinary year of doubtful skies, into large cocks ; thence carried, a mature, wholesome feed, and ricked on a proportionable base. This year the sun and wind have made the hay almost too quickly, and there will not be much difficulty in finishing all to-night. It is busy in the field all day, and towards four o'clock *fervet opus* along the brook alders. Lucy Sayers leaves her kitchen to rake after the waggon, a quaint figure in a vast bonnet and girt-up skirts. Maëry Bish labours elegantly and not too hard in a spotted blouse and what she would call a "siler'at ;" Liza, old Packham's niece, hatless and touzled, looks pretty and works famously, her pink print rolled up to her strong elbows. Tomsett, to whom all give the honourable title of "Mas'" for this turn, commands the army with traditional authority and ancient wisdom. A score of children roll in the grass and do their best to derange the haycocks ; there is a gay babble of talk and laughter, through

which comes the shout from the waggon, the warning to the man on the top to "Staand faast!" and the adjurations to Sally and Rodney in the shafts.

Mrs. Lydia has brought Alice, who tugs at a rake, after a disappointed attempt on a fine new fork. Margaret Fletcher looks on with Mrs. Lydia, a little wistful or rebellious at admission of hay-days over; very soon I see her raking with Maëry and Liza in high spirits, careless of a *tenue* which was not meant for the hayfield.

Afternoon declining, we have tea in the field, piling divans of hay round about the kettle. Zero wakes from his doze and balances sleepily on to his hind legs, more from habit than a desire of bread and butter. He is presently trying to convey to Alice the fact that the tradition of the house against very sweet tea as a beverage for terriers is one he never accepted.

"May he have *one* more lump?" I hear; and discover that the mixture is already more than half-and-half.

The jolting waggon comes and goes, and the field clears slowly before our eyes. Up in the yard the grey-green pile grows under the feet of the men. The elders along the upper hedge hang thick with their creamy panicles of flower; and their smell,

honeyed yet pungent, a heavy strong essence, comes in the light airs across the universal atmosphere of hay. This blending of elder and hay is to my associative mind one of the most forcible notes in the scale of the year. June by June it renews all the old hayfields, the cloudless summers of childhood, the poignant passages of youth, before the present course of uneventful seasons turned all to peace perchance too lightly accepted.

The sun goes early, in a bank of grey mist ; the waggon lingers for the last rakings ; Alice and the ladies have left us. The men sit in luxurious ease about the yard, and pass the beer while Bish and Roser top the rick with trusses of straw against chance of storm. Out of the south gathers and rises a vast intricate system of rain, ashy grey parallels tangled with diagonal weft of threaded vapour ever climbing nearer the zenith ; lower down looms a blank leaden vault across which hurry little black drifts ; close to the horizon a clear hard edge of cumulo-stratus cloud shows silvery-white upon the dun shroud. The rain is coming, past any doubt, this time. I give it till nine o'clock, at farthest, as I contemplate the shapely cube of my dozen tons of well-got hay. In this mind of serene content there is a touch of commiseration

—wholly pure, shall I say?—for my neighbours whose mowing-machines sounded in my ears all the day.

As I saunter up the broad path of the garden, with Zero at heel—alas! Zero, you come to heel all too readily, at whiles, and your gait is a trifle old-gentlemanly—I would like to tell the sunburnt greenery to hold out ever so little longer, for a soft veil has been swiftly let down over the village and the further woods, and there is a sound of abundance of rain. I hear it and the wind it brings coming up the hill from copse to copse, till at last it fills the garden and strikes the firs into the pleasantest music they have made this year. I stand face up to the pelt until the rich reek of the thirsty soil fills my nostrils, and I am driven in by the increasing flood. Half the night, waking to listen, I hear in a sleepy content the multitudinous voices of the rain, the murmur of the garden, the gush of drops against the window, the bubble of all the eave-shoots running full and over. The thought of to-morrow morning is a recurring pleasure; the end of labours with the water-can, when every fibre and cell that grows will visibly rejoice in its refreshing, not merely the pegged verbenas and the carnation seedlings, but every hedge leaf and roadside weed

from Firle to Crowborough, indifferently watered through the darkness, whilst

“ὅε δ’ ἅπα Ζεὺς
Πάμπαντος, αὐτὰρ ἄν Ζέφυρος μέγας, αἰὲν ἔφουδος.”

12th.—To-day the morning broke, if the word may be used of the pale light which so slowly grew behind the tossing fir-boughs, in ceaseless rain. The world was roofed in by grey cloud whose flying wreaths now and again curled through the trees ; beyond the garden-walls the elms faded into a background of streaming vapour. The vegetable world rejoiced visibly ; and after the late dull heat, one's own fibres were the better for the downpour. And on the side of utility, such a “fall” goes to replenish the springs : another day or two such as this, and the “flit” or surface wells, now perilously low, will fill up. Round about Arnington a dry summer always brings us to the edge of a water-famine ; and two or three inches of rain more or less at the critical time mean very much to us in the matter of health and comfort.

There was no stay to the sweeping flood all the forenoon ; and I recognised the day as one of my especial holidays. The garden is looking after itself as no army of gardeners could tend it ; there is small

chance of callers breaking in on one's solitude ; and so a solid morning may be spent on despatching the accumulated arrears of small things, in improving the mind, or in that medicinal idling which is for some of us at times such an admirable thing. Mrs. Kitty always keeps one novel uncut for such a day. Mrs. Lydia devotes the time to the mystery called, I think, "picking and turning," or to sorting the Rector's old sermons. As I have no such employment kept for the occasion, I went into my study about nine o'clock with an indefinite plan which comprised letter-writing, a little reading, re-arrangement of certain bookshelves ; and left a liberal margin for contemplative moments, if they should arrive.

At the outset I was disturbed by Lucy Sayers, who required me to fill up some lacunæ in the day's bill of fare. I told her we would have something out of the old book ; and took down "The London Art of Cookery," a ragged leather volume of the last century, containing in its text and the MS. comment many delightful kitchen fantasies, conceived on a scale of baronial liberality. I passed over the recipe for "Bombarded Veal," which requires a penny loaf, half a pound of fat bacon, an anchovy, marjoram, lemon-peel, chyan pepper, chopped oysters, ketchup, artichoke bottoms, and truffles ; and suggested that

the "Shoulder of Mutton Surprised" might be practicable. Lucy thinks she could manage it ; all except the barberries for garnish. She is a little sceptical about the "London Cookery," since the last attempt to produce "Florendine Rabbits" by its directions led to a bread-and-cheese lunch. For a sweet, I leave her to choose between the Solomon's Temple in Flummery and the Desert Island, and to find modern substitutes for the sack, orange-flower water, and eringo-root prescribed. Lucy departs to her province, fired with the high task before her, and I turn again to my morning of odds and ends.

I possess one of those uncomfortably analytical minds which count the footsteps in a walk and half-consciously measure proportions in the pattern of a carpet. When I had written my letters, I vacantly watched for some little space the rain plashing on the window-panes, and then found myself cataloguing, so to say, the contents of my study. From a mere mechanical counting of items I slipped into a sort of catalogue *raisonné* ; and letting the book I had opened lie on my knee, I amused myself thus for half an hour, perhaps, with my belongings. I began at the corner of the ceiling next the door, where a couple of spiders live frugally and to all appearance brotherly, protected by a pencil line on the plaster, a magic

circle within which Lucy Sayers' brush may not come. Any nonsense is possible to "scientific" people ; and so my sanity escapes graver reflection. Outside the circle Lucy dusts with double zeal, and our understanding about the matter provides that if ever the criminals break their sanctuary, they shall go. Lucy is wholly without that respect for the spider and its works which she attributes to the inferior race summarily characterised as "gells." "Spiders lucky?" says Lucy : "I reckon they're middlin' unlucky when they comes near *me*!"

Next to the spiders I note my main bookcase, a roomy lodging for other things than books. Papers of garden seeds share a shelf with broken-down fishing-tackle ; an ancient *hortus-siccus* lies in company with candle-snuffers and a mole-trap. The books are, I reflect, as I look at the somewhat ragged array of backs, mostly of the old world ; cracked calf and warped vellum outnumber the cloth-gilt moderns ; "Esmond" in an early edition is, I think, my nearest point to modern romance ; my science stops at the earlier Darwin. Being once scolded by Mrs. Kitty because I had not read a serious novel of last week, I explained that I had thought I ought to begin at the beginning of literature, and work downwards in order to the moderns. "Well, and where did you .

begin? and where have you got to now?" says the Censor; and I tell her that I began at Eutropius as quite a small boy and am now got somewhere about the Elizabethans.

"Fancy that now!" is Mrs. Kitty's comment.

Even amongst my ancients there are odd gaps; I entertain only personal friends, whether amid the Heliconian top shelf of Venetian and Dutch editions, or the dictionaries that repose on the floor. I like even a lexicon to have a character of its own; my commentaries are chosen more for the humours of the commentator than their bearing on the text. I mostly dispense, spite of the several deductions possible from the fact, with those works without which no gentleman's library is complete. Order and rank on the shelves go mainly by inward character; some volumes seem to have an almost spontaneous way of sorting themselves. Bernardino Daniello's Dante constantly finds its way from its fellows, the Convito and Petrarch, to stand beside Conington's *Æneid*; and more than once I have found a stout *Rasselas* with plates pinning a shabby paper *Candide* against the partition. The *Iliad* and the *Republic* are generally separated by a Chase's *Ethics*; and I always humour and encourage this rational collocation of authors.

Above the bookcase, whose top carries *desueta arma*, an old gun-case and a lashless whip, hangs a row of engravings ; a very fair second state of Ben Arthur, half a dozen Constable mezzotints, a Samuel Palmer, a pencil scribble of Leech's, and two or three unknown hands that bide their time to be the vogue. Beside the chimneypiece are five silhouettes in oval frames—my family portraits. The first of these, with capacious gills done in white on the black, and gilt lines to indicate the hair, presents my mother's father, whom I can remember by his shirt-frill and a story he told—how he once left the Dragoons, who were ready to charge the Luddites in the market-place, and walked out alone with his hat in his hand to speak to the mob, and how he got them out of the Square, and down the Vicar's Croft, and on to the Moor, without so much as throwing a stone. There was another story, which I liked when I grew older, about a bank failing and my grandfather going to a friend in trade and asking for a loan to save his credit. The friend gave him a draft for the amount without saying a word, and put my grandfather's receipt in the middle of the parlour fire—confidence that was not mistaken. They were rough days in the North-country town where he was brought up : one of his first recollections was of his father's house being

burned by machinery-rioters, and of himself and his sisters being taken in a waggon to an uncle's house in the country, arriving in the early summer morning ; and of his father calling out, "They've smoked us out at last, George!" He said that the fire and the journey in the waggon were all a kind of dream, not very terrible ; but that when they reached the house, so still and quiet, with white pigeons on the grass and the shadows of the hollyhocks across the flagged path in the morning sun, it all came back to him with an agony of crying.

This burnt-out great-grandfather, whose silhouette shows a tailed wig and a very strong chin, was an attorney ; save that he married a penniless beauty, I have no further tradition of him. Next to him hangs a paternal great-uncle, a sea-captain who died in a French prison : it is told of him that he once swore at his sister because she cut his toast in two instead of in three. The sister, a spinster Mehala, a light of some Independent congregation, is beneath him, in a mob cap ; her snuff-box and stick are extant, together with her fame for housekeeping, extreme plainness of person, and stateliness of carriage. Last, under a full wig, is the strong original of all our derivatory noses, the hook of the Derbyshire dalesman beyond whose cloth-mill begin the myths. I feel a sort of

guardianship over me from these shadows of ancestors:
I owe to them that their descendant never

“Frangenda miseram funestat imagine gentem.”

I sometimes think that they who possess ancestral Knellers, Jansens, Zuccheros (not so much perhaps of a Prelate, a Privy Seal, or High Admiral as of a succession of obscure country gentility addicted valiantly to serve their country at home and at the wars), that such fortunates should be beyond the danger of a wilful degeneracy. My blind silhouettes have their power : what influence might there not be in the eyes of a Van Dyck? It was a saying of my father's, which touches this use of descent on its other side—

“The first Radical must have been a man whose father was hanged.”

Some way from the silhouettes hangs a little pencil sketch of a girl's head, a relic of the grand passion of my early teens. It escaped the fire by some chance; and after all these lustrums I am not sorry to have it by me—as a dry primrose may mark a page in one's solid folios. Through the quaint horror of the unequal eyes and laboured hair, I can see pretty Barbara as she looked in the last summer of our fellowship—I recall even the mauve pinafore, the

hair-ribbon, the Jacob's-laddered stocking of the long play-days ; the shell necklace and morocco shoes of party-nights. We used to swing together, her hair blowing across my face on the breathless downward stoop ; blackberried together ; in the hush of warm summer sermon-times dissected our Sunday posies ; she would be very contemptuous towards my struggles with *τυπτω*, on the strength of her French irregular verbs, when the schoolroom grew dark in the winter afternoons, and the far-off muffin-bell brought the thought of tea and the end of labours. I must have been a shy and awkward lover ; she, I think, would have grown into a coquette : neither for her teasing nor her friendliness (and which was sweeter I could never say) did I ever tell my devotion. There was always an intangible bound, beyond which our wildest play never led us ; only once, when she dared me to shake hands with her through the quickset hedge which divided our gardens, and I drove my bare arm through the worst of the pricks, and felt both her hands grasp mine, might the world have been turned upside down. But I let the moment go ; something on the instant grew between us more impenetrable than all the hedges of the world, and that love-passage was over. When Bab and her people went away to live in Devonshire, I was left miserable, no doubt, but

full of valorous hopes and splendid dreams. I never saw her again ; but for two whole years (which in our money means at least forty) I lived her knight : until the gallopings among the kitchen garden plots with a beanstick for lance, in glorious quests and tourneys, were exchanged for copy-book Epics of Camelot, and Barbara was forsaken for an imaginary damosel of imitative construction called (I think) Lystrenore. I drew portraits of Lystrenore in a Pre-Raphaelite vein, more than enough ; they have not escaped the fire. But the devotion expressed by that well-moistened pencil-point lives in the picture of Bab—

“ Vorbei sind die Kinderspiele
Und alles rollt vorbei ”—

but not altogether, protests the little profile—

“ Glauben und Lieb' und Treu'.”

The study timepiece, the tall clock in the hall, and the cuckoo on the stairs, give one o'clock with the unanimity of (let us say) a School Managers' Meeting ; and the morning has gone with half my idlenesses undone. The rain still drips from the honeysuckle at the window ; but after these indoor hours the open air begins to call, and after lunch I propose one of my favourite diversions, a thoroughly wet walk. The

clouds are still down on the hillsides, and a grey misty light lies on the landscape ; but the driving pelt of the morning has fallen to a soft blowing cloud of moisture, which pleasantly bedews the face and gathers in the eyebrows. The yellow brook by Dogkennel has almost drowned the single plank that makes the bridge, and my path lies through plashy lanes and woods, where a moment's breeze brings down a thunder-shower of drops. I make my way to a barway in a tall hedge, giving a prospect to the north over the moorland ridges of the Forest. As I lean over the gateway in the silence of the vacant hour, I can hear the drip from the elms in the further field ; birds and beasts lie close and still. The hillside over against me shows dark at the bottom under the trailing fringe of the rain-cloud, which blots out the hedgerows halfway up the hill. Over everything the fine rain sifts and drizzles : the drops on the bramble beside me run together and slip into the hedge bottom ; little rivers meander through the grass at my feet ; the field furrows are pouring down the slope to the brook, the river, back to the sea again. Man and his works are put aside ; and earth and heaven are at their business in that comprehensive way which our partial faculties may so profitably contemplate.

As I was on my way home, keeping under the hedge-side "in the loo," as we say, I came on a very old labourer standing up to shelter, a ragged sack on his shoulders, the rain trickling from hat-brim and nose. He told me he had been there since eleven o'clock—the bailiff had thought as how it looked like clearing off, and had sent him to do a job of gapping; and if he had gone home it might have cleared off after all. So he had eaten his dinner and stood out in the rain, shifting from one wet foot to the other hour by hour, and thinking, Heaven knows what.

The field he was in was poached into a red quagmire by sheep, who stood tail to the wind, motionless except for an occasional shake of their sodden fleeces—the whole a picture of dull wretchedness. I find the old man is David Walder, eighty-four next birthday, doing a full labourer's work on Sacketts farm. He is crippled by rheumatism, and has to walk two miles to his work every day; is looking forward with dread to the haying which begins next week, and the harvest that follows, with their long overtime. "I be that tired," he says. All this blundering cruelty slips in, of course, between the several necessary links of authority on a large estate: the bailiff has no commission to ease the work of any

particular hand—possibly it is by his kindness that Walder has not been already turned off ; to the steward or agent David Walder is nothing more than an item on the pay-sheet ; the owner, Mr. Newcome, if he ever looks over the farms on a Saturday afternoon, knows less of his labourers than he does of his crops.

Sacketts is in Tyefold parish, and out of the range of our watchful Rector. The Vicar of Tyefold is of a blameless conversation and, I believe, is the first authority in the Diocese upon Low-Side Windows. Walder has never seen him to speak to : he reckons he's most likely been to his place and found him out ; as he would any time between six and nine of the day at this time of year. I suggest that the Vicar might speak to Mr. Newcome, and get him put to lighter work. He turns to me with something like terror in his watery eyes ; anything but that ! His one object in life is to show that he can still do a full day's work ; for this he strains to equal the younger men, and is ready at a hint for the hardest jobs. If once he be thought to be past work, they will turn him off ; and that is the final catastrophe : these old people decline to take the workhouse into consideration. I contrived to reassure him that nothing should be done to jeopardise his wages ; and

telling him that it is less than an hour to knocking-off time, continued my way along the hedge. I looked back from the gate into the next field, and saw him, the sack drawn a little closer, the head dropped lower, motionless under his thorn tree, a figure of patient misery ; a form of dread surely to us his masters, if we could look beyond those walls of reasonableness and decency and well-meaning which we build about our ways. I could not comfortably think of my morning's employment, with old Walder's leisure hours on my mind ; but at length appeased myself with the determination to see the Vicar or Mr. Newcome himself in a few days, and with the recollection that in a like case in Arnington, the Rector's application to the employer resulted in kindest consideration of the matter and a long-service pension to the old servant for the rest of his days, with the further thoughtful provision of light work to break the strangeness of the first holiday in seventy years. Our large landowners are anything but hard men ; they are kind enough on due occasion, if only the occasion is brought to them, and they have not to seek it. I feel sure that in this case Mr. Newcome will be just and generous when his attention is gained ; and that old Walder will not have long to wait for easier times, for rest

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at last, and the lifelong shadow of the Union gone for ever.

Before I reached the garden gate the rain was over, and the grey evening lifted to show a pale golden line in the west. Hope stirred livelier in various directions ; for old Walder and all his mates ; for pension schemes, public or private ; for a fair to-morrow ; for Lucy Sayers' experiments in Mutton Surprised and the Flummery Solomon's Temple, which the punctual dinner-bell announced at that moment to be ready for proof. As I came up the still dripping garden, I thought, by a whimsical contrast, of Piccadilly at that hour ; the dim light, the lamps beginning to glimmer on the drenched pavements, the dull thunder of the omnibuses going by in the steam of their own horses, the moist crowd wading to the refuge through the spirting mud ; and came back with relief to the placid close of my wet day in the country.

18th.—Heavy showers of late, ending in one whole day of quiet rain, put the garden in tune, and allowed me to leave flowers and herbs to their own devices and the restricted ministrations of Bish for a term. It is in a man's power to make the quality of a holiday independent of its outward conditions : by steady antecedent minding of home-affairs, a week's

peregrination may be made fuller than a six months' voyage of the ordinary travelled man. Thus I found my late journey into Oxfordshire to contain more matter than a cruise among the Cyclades in far-off *Wanderjahre*. At Oxford I found the perennial new buildings which vex the conservative soul ; a vast civic pile in St. Aldate's, and some puzzling demi-colleges off Holywell ; St. Mary's new apex gleaming like a nightcap amid the new pinnacles, frigid mechanisms—

“ Icily regular, splendidly null.”

I mused whether it would be possible, before any more of the old features vanish, to move the whole modern business of the University to Brompton—Schools, Professors, Delegacies, Extension Meetings—and there make them happy in beautiful new buildings. With them might go the trams, the stone-saw, the paper-boy, and a hundred other energies of the time, leaving behind them the *Genius loci* they insult, the relics of Oxford's immemorial grace, to rest through quiet terms and slumberous vacations, educational in a way which perhaps not even Endowed Research has yet discovered.

When I am in Oxford, I generally find that my ramblings about the town follow more or less a

customary order. I lean over Magdalen Bridge and watch the punts emerge from the archway with hollow splash and ring ; I wait by St. Mary's entry while the bell is going, and the gowns flock by to Congregation ; from a narrow lane I look up to a house-front, white in the sunlight, with green window-boxes, to the open windows of the rooms which were mine. I am a *revenant* ; I find myself inclined to walk softly, to give room to the corporeal passing crowd, to stop in convenient corners to watch the currents that have gone by me. On this last visit, Summer Term was on the lees, and that vague spirit of unrest was abroad which drives the undergraduate from his haunts ; something of the old feeling awoke even in me when I met the clattering hansoms, hat-box and portmanteau atop, and the serene, brown, wholesome faces, set towards New Road and the Long Vac. The man who has not kept up his connection with his College, and has no friend even amongst Dons and Fellows—those νεκύων ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα still haunting the ways of life—should choose the far end of the Long Vacation for revisiting Oxford. When there is a touch of yellow in the Broad Walk elms, and milder sunshine sleeps upon the mouldering façades ; when the coil of the Extensionists has died away, and the new electric installation is finished in

the College Hall ; then is it easiest to raise the dead, and renew one's ancient terms.

My walks about the town generally lead me by a certain Tractarian-Gothic doorway in a cobble-paved side-street, a door that I seldom pass without an almost physical pang. Moralists have, I think, unaccountably neglected to take into consideration that flightiness of the human conscience which so often produces an odd want of sense of proportion. I doubt if any crime against my kind or my country could leave a worse sting of remorse in me than did the fact that I once went through that door to dine with the Head, a forlorn, uncouth Freshman in a black morning-coat and blue-spotted tie. As with the superstitions learnt in childhood, the horror of the thing will not quite rub out of the grain : I still see the puzzled shirt-fronts, the unwincing politeness of the hostess whom the College called Polly. I remember a man on my staircase who once asked me up to his rooms to see the empty bottles in his scout's-hole—the vast relics of a wine to which I had not been invited. It was a deed of a curious badness ; but had it been mine, the memory would have passed long before that accusing tail-coat began to lose its power. The Puginesque door with its broken-nosed corbels will never be to me as the

other doors in the lane. To-day I met in the Turl Lethbridge of St. Boniface's, the volunteer Don, the Juvenalian

“ Bonus miles, tutor bonus ”

of our day : it flashed upon me that he was at that fatal dinner ; and though I knew I was safe from those mildly-peering glasses, I confess I looked another way. Not until I had wandered down the meadows and along the towpath, observing the devious arks and shallops silken-sailed with parasols, scattered by one rough eight in training for Henley, did that obsession wholly pass away.

I had found rooms near the High ; and as darkness fell I looked from an attic window upon the green sky behind St. Mary's and the sky-line of pinnacles, battlements, and chimney-pots ; here a dusky sycamore feathering out between the houses ; here a glimpse of a lane-end under a yellow lamp, with the momentary traffic over its cobblestones, now men in flannels, late from the river, now two girls in lilac blouses, now a flowing M.A.—the very Proctor ! For some merciful reason the electric light, whose blue lightnings make darkness in the High a kind of Walpurgisnacht, was for the nonce extinct ; and I was able to recall how in my last term I once

looked out on the town on such an evening as this, and with the heroic presentiment of youth, said good-bye for ever to Oxford. Often since that returning, can I say that the Ego which, leaning from the Blue Boar Lane window and watching Bagley under the moon, on that June night began (and left half-way) a ballade of farewells, did not in truth take an eternal leave? Yes; it was not I who so rarely mixed dreams and life under these darkening walls, but a soul which some spell of hour and place seems to infuse into my being. I feel motions of barbaric sentiment, of amazing hope; dearest postulates begin to stir with life; and an absolution of blissful ignorance floats downwards over all. Couplets of a ghostly Newdigate echo from morning meadows where they were born; thin voices halloo across shadowy quads. I hear as in a dream Tom begin to clang over the roofs; but a harsher note, the roll and clatter of the tram below me in the High, serves to break the spell, and bring back my wonted self and the sufficing common world beyond the moonlit spires.

From Oxford I journeyed into the flats of the Windrush and the Coln—a land of rushy streams, innumerable willow-rows and landmark poplar-clumps—whose differences of character, in colour and atmosphere, from that of my accustomed Sussex horizons,

were a recreation in themselves. The very air had a new quality, the villages a climate of their own, mixed breaths of stonebrash soil, limestone walls and roofs, and many brooks ; wholly unlike the thatch, faggot, dead-leaf, wood-fire smells of the Weald. This pleasure in distinctions suggests that perhaps we do not generally (to use a logical figure) look on life *intensively* enough ; do so concern ourselves with the denotations of things that the plurality of worlds cannot hold us, when an acre of terrestrial meadow might suffice all aspirations. Of course there is a back side to this theory ; hideous subdivisions are imaginable ; but I think that practically, in things of the natural world, it deserves consideration.

I found myself at home again on a still evening, when the whole garden seemed to exhale, so to say, the light imbibed during the burning day. The eight-foot spikes of the delphinium looked like pale blue fires ; the mounds of the Canterbury Bells showed no dead purple or pink, but vibrant colour ; a white rose against the green gloom of the yew hedge shone with inward light like a star. The whole aspect is one which is seen but twice or thrice in a summer, under uncommon conditions of evening clearness following a very bright day.

Scents of mignonette and night-stocks, not the

strong immediate odour, but the evanescent secondary sweetness that begins at a few yards from the flowers, drifted and hung about the paths, crossed at one point by a rich suggestion from the strawberry quarter. I took all the phenomena as a sort of welcome home ; though in truth the motionless spires and shadowy leafage of the borders, the solemnity which affects all foliage under late evening light, never seemed further from human communion. Nature will not break her pact against man—

“Les jardins parlent peu, si ce n'est dans mon livre.”

Zero greeted me with an alarum of barks, his old eyes failing him in the dusk ; and stood, when I called him, head down and tail feebly wagging, crushed and apologetic for the monstrous mistake. Bish presented himself, with impassive touch of hat-brim and eyes on his boots, to hand over the vicegerency, and ease his shoulders of the heavy burden of the week's responsibility. I commend his care ; and half unwillingly admitting that things are looking what you might call pretty middlin'-like, the laboriously honest soul departs, relieved of a weight.

Lucy Sayers' welcome carries with it the impression that I have been away on the Grand Tour.

“I *be* glad to see you back, Sir ! I never can get

on without no proper cookin'." To-night the table groans with a whole week's arrears of Lucy's pent-up energy, and the kitchen is no more defrauded of its master.

So to bed—

"Desideratoque incumbere lecto"—

the home-bed, sweeter in the lavendered whiteness of Lucy's press for experience of dubious cribs in strange hostels; to sleep, well content, though I cannot bid the house rejoice in its lord, nor say, for grave lack of the wherewithal—

"Ridere quicquid est domi cachinnorum."

July 2nd.—There fell to-day that hour wherein the year is clearly at the height, when it has reached the fulness of change, and has no greater beauty to unfold. After to-day it will be all downhill; here beyond question Summer turns her face from us. The morning was fresh and sweet; the garden was never so gay. Queen lilies swayed in ranks and companies, smutched with gold dust on their lower petals; under them the roses glowed, in pointed bud or open to the yellow heart. Lower still bloomed masses of campanula, Sweet William, pentstemon, with the earlier of the annuals, lavatera, linaria, clarkia, great

double poppies, and that most excellent new-comer Shirley, in a spacious width by itself. Every colour harmonised with all—purple Canterbury Bell and buff testaceum lily, blue delphinium and red rose—all save the scarlet lychnis, which jars in every contrast, and exists only for his own splendid hue.

Though endless change is still before us, carnations just plumping their buds, hollyhocks showing colour here and there amid their green buttons, sunflowers climbing to full stature, phlox and aster biding their time ; yet here is a period fulfilled. The Summer is of age ; and of long custom the moment has for me a touch of sadness beyond the forlornest days of early autumn.

I had been working in the vegetable quarters, making up arrears of my late recess ; and such reflections as these came to me in a back-straightening walk up and down the long path. I had superintended Bish's gathering of peas for Lucy, checking that selection of the elderly grey pod filled with hard cubic seeds which are his ideal of a "nice-eatin' pea ;" an ideal which he enforces, as many greater folk in larger matters, very cheerfully on the rest of the world. With the Ashleaves he can scarcely go wrong, though he shakes his head over the extravagance of them—early are they and small, and of rare succulence—give

him Roses and Hebrons, large and filling, and not too alluringly nice. In general, I find it safer to secure my garden-stuff for myself; and so pea, bean, and potato are culled at their grand climacteric, and are in the pot before they have time to resent the change by flagging and softening. This matter of selection of the fittest, and recollection of some recent experiences of travel, led to reflections on the vegetables of the nation at large. I find—in the matter of peas—that at public dining-places in the summer, one is generally served with small bluish and greyish cubes, somewhat hard and floury in texture, indeterminate in flavour, save for the mint. I trace the natural history of these vegetables thus :—

Seedsmen breed a quick and strong-growing, heavy-cropping stock, coarse and insipid, all touch of quality lost in the gain of abundance and rapid return. This seed is sown in market-gardens and given rough field-culture; the pods are gathered, very well developed (for the tally's sake), by women of the tramp class, and are carted in large masses to markets, thence to the greengrocer's trays, where they lie in sun and dust for a day, maybe. When they finally reach the saucepan and the table, they pass without comment as "green peas," no more critically considered than the slice of

bread or the mustard. All this holds good, *mutatis mutandis*, of every sort of market vegetable and fruit—early potatoes, strawberries, lettuces, cucumbers, “greens.” Fed on American pith and cotton-wool, the public hardly knows the taste of a right English pippin or pearmain: anything light, dry, insipid, will serve for the market, so it be fairly large and has a showy skin. And in course of time the thing of generous juices and sound fibres becomes not only neglected, but positively distasteful: just as Miss Cottingham finds our sweet cream-coloured butter naught, while she remembers the salt material of middle-chrome hue found at prudent studio-teas; and as inland folk visiting a fishing-village miss some added customary tang in their fresh-caught sole or whiting; as Bish turned the other day from the fill of very choice Turkish I gave him, back to the dark-hued abomination of fiery stench which he gets of Mis’ Bennett, and smokes in a short, saturated clay.

In the matter of garden stuff the British people, save some of the wealthier who can be upsides with their own gardeners, some cottagers of finer strain than the common, and some wise amateurs like myself, are quite ignorant of what is good to eat. “No garden like Covent Garden,” says the Cockney; not knowing that if nothing else came between, in the way

of dirty fingers and worse contingency, the mere time lost between gathering and cooking destroys all the finer essence of the herb, the inward aroma, the clean wholesomeness. A cucumber twelve hours out of the frame is simple poison ; belated lettuces—even peas—may be eatable (as many things unseasonable may be done with at a pinch ; November roses, or a bride at forty) ; but the man who can, in the words of the classic, “go into the garden and cut a cabbage”—to say nothing of Paxtons, Blackhearts, or Jargonelles—has a treasure out of reach of the common variety of millionnaire.

About teatime came the Rector, on his way back from visiting a far corner of the parish, white-footed, and glad of the yew-tree shade and the tea poured out by Mrs. Kitty, who arrived with Gervase about the same time, on a pretext of getting rose-buddings. Gervase had spent a week in London on his way back from Oxford. He took his Second in Mods. ; the Newdigate was not for him this year : he proposes to have a “thorough slack” in the country, professing satiety of Oxford things. This will pass, I doubt not, some time before the cheery October term calls again to the grey city of youth.

The Rector had been to see old Widow Blackman, the representative, with a sadly pinched jurisdiction,

of the wise woman of tradition. We all know her infinitely pathetic face, scored with wrinkles, with a recollection of pretty lines about the mouth and chin, and the pale blue eyes that look with mournful patience on an incomprehensible world. We know, too, something of the reality behind the mask; the inveterate begging-nature, the cunning, the all too frequent drops of spirits. The Rector always comes from Widda Blackman's depressed and silent; he knows the impenetrable recesses of that half-Pagan nature, and is not to be deceived by pious guile now grown mechanic. Through all kinds of religious cultivation, from the Church Catechism of her childhood, through the Calvinistic rule of her first husband, the fervid Baptist zeal of her second and third men, to the return in her eighth decade to the Church, to the foreseeing care and keen siege of intellect and devotion on the Rector's part, she has remained mean, crafty, animal, base utterly. Now, but a poor ghost of a witch, she is only credited with power to wish away warts. Warts are, as far as my observation goes, almost the only subject of superstition left among our people. Children cut notches on a stick, and the dirt-bred nuisance departs; you can wish your warts on to another boy, or sell them; but if you want a radical cure in a bad case, you must

go to Widda Blackman at Catstails. I can find no other trace of belief in the occult in the village. Gervase thinks it is want of imagination ; I fancy it is something worse than that—want of heart, exhibited in the last degree. Even so I can rejoice at the disappearance of the miserable tyranny of grimmer superstitions. My Lincolnshire nurse taught me, as a nervous small boy, all her lore of signs and portents ; and I remember the sickness of terror (to this day not quite worn out, but sometimes rising, a thin, uncomfortable spectre) at spying a winding-sheet in the candle, or hearing a dog howling in the awful dark hours when I ought to have been safe in the snug citadel of dreams. Amongst the rest, Letty Colbatch taught me that an owl portended a death ; and when once in a country museum I came upon a *strix flammea* in a glass case, my small intellectuals sweated in anguished question whether a stuffed owl was a real portent ; the dim hope that the spell was broken failing before the stare of his yellow glassy eye. Looking back, after Elia's manner, on that small boy as another self, I could almost cry for him now. Best-hearted Letty, what torment you taught me ! The Rector is with me as to the cause of the general decay of superstition ; but it is a subject he hates to talk about offhand. There is among the gentry a

spurious sort of successor to the vanishing faith of the cottagers; people nail horseshoes over their smart stable doors, and respect numbers and times with a good deal of uncomfortable solicitude. Mrs. Kitty agrees that it is most absurd; she never cares the least about thirteen at table; but then you can never know what other people think about it. And May marriages? suggests the Rector. Oh, of course, *that's* a very different thing, Mrs. Kitty thinks. Everybody knows it is really unlucky; she has known quite a number of people who did it, and were all *most* unfortunate. In fact, she considers it really tempting Providence.

"That feeling," the Rector says, "has of course been attributed to the pre-Reformation regard for the month of Mary; but that can hardly have anything to do with the short-coating of babies, which the cottage people won't think of in May. My wife finds that scruple very common: she had an argument this spring with Mrs. Wickens, who utterly refused to change her child's frocks till the end of the month. She wouldn't mind for herself; but she knew it would bring trouble to the child: no, she didn't mean bronchitis, but real trouble; she'd known plenty of people do it, and not one but what was sorry afterwards. So she waited for a lucky east wind on the first

M

of June, to make the great alteration. It was Mrs. Wickens, too, that told my wife the appalling piece of natural history that a year in which lionesses have cubs (no restriction of any latitude—either the Zoo or Timbuctoo) was a very unfortunate one for human babies to be born in. The origin of a myth like that is beyond my guessing: it sounds like an ἀπαξ λεγόμενον, a spontaneous generation; but no one who knows Mrs. Wickens could fancy that possible."

"It doesn't sound like intentional humour," I said: "not in the usual line of Sussex wit, such as the jokes about going to Bau'combe, and the three true lies, and the Piddinghoe magpies."

"No," the Rector thinks, "it is a real serious case for the folklore folk. But as to May weddings, I am afraid poor old Blackman must have defied that law more than once. But of course in her young days people were shockingly free and easy."

"Oh, of course, shockingly," replies Mrs. Kitty, with her mind absorbed in her watch as she rises to go home.

Gervase stayed on after the others had gone, and we took a few turns round the garden together. In Time's unconscionable *accelerando* it seems but a day since we were idling so among the fritillaries: now the clear luminous blossoms of the evening

primrose are open in the dusking air. We drift upon verse again; touch on the new poetry books, their leanness; and discuss the modern equivalents in Arnington to the ballad and its kind. I give Gervase a few selections from our Volkslieder: they are fearful when merely repeated; but their effect when rendered at Choir Suppers and Harvest Homes, through the blue smoke and beery air, is not to be imagined. We have some examples of (I think) native strains, melancholy rubbish such as *What is the Life of a Man, more than the Leaves on the Trees*, a village classic which one Joe Vinall used to copy out for singing-men at a shilling a-piece; but these are outnumbered by the strange Irish-American species, of which *The Fire in the Grate* and *I'm a Man has done wrong to his Parents* are representative. Even these are giving way to the mere music-hall froth, which filters down to Arnington some three months after the London vogue.

Gervase thinks that we can't expect much from secular lyres while we sing such rot in the way of hymns on Sunday—rhymes that would not be stood in a pantomime, and drivelling familiarities of expression. It occurred to me here that my morning meditation upon the decay of taste in greenstuff, the tolerance of the *caulis suburbanus* and his kind,

touched in some sort this matter of popular song. With a general democratising process at work, we get naturally width, not point or edge ; taste being unconcentrated, is vulgar ; there is a common ignorance of good verse exactly as there is of good marrowfats. We are all pea-eaters (with our knives, too, some of us)—all critics ; and the standard, of legume or laureate, drops to the multitudinous average. Gervase fancies it is something like that. None of the finer perceptions *can* be taught. People think they know at least all about external nature offhand. Some one lately referred quite reverently to a passage in "Oliver Twist," where the sunlight is reflected from a pool of blood on the floor to the ceiling of Nancy Sikes's garret. "I told her," says Gervase, "that I preferred Shelley's handling of the angle of incidence and reflection—

‘The lake-reflected sun illumine,
The yellow bees in the ivy bloom.’

‘Oh, but that’s only poetry !’ says the precious critic. One touch, of course, is sheer beastly impossibility ; the other is an instantaneous photograph, besides the ‘immortality’ part of it.”

From this we strayed to considerations of natural descriptions and landscape feeling in the poets. I

think we do not on the whole give due place to the purely descriptive parts of great verse ; do not sufficiently note the height touched in Homeric and Virgilian similes ; or such instances of spiritual power conveyed in little more than exquisite description as Christabel and the Ancient Mariner ; most strangely neglect the tremendous painting power of Dante, more particularly shown in touches of landscape feeling that we are mostly pleased to confine to later periods—touches as accurate and as magnificent as Turner's. (The storm on Pratomagno is perhaps the finest sustained description ; sometimes a phrase is almost as pregnant—*il tremolar della marina,—si muova bruno bruno.*) And matters of this kind are, it is to be feared, beyond the reach of the Education Code ; as yet beyond the reach, it seems, of University Extensions, of shilling manuals, of the whole art of Learning at Second-Hand.

Thus we propound harmonious theories, pacing up and down the darkening alleys. Gervase, I notice, as the argument becomes a little involved, tears to pieces a rose carnation he plucked in an abstracted moment ; and I myself only at the last moment come to sense of the lovely evening sky behind us—no fierce glories of colour or energy of motion, but a clear pale green, barred with one narrow streak of

scarlet, and almost drowning the first white edge of the new moon—so both of us acting our own text, and missing that finer sense of things of which we talked.

15th.—To-day I was about the garden early, in the pure cool of the morning. We had a week of flagrant heat, when the sun shone his fifteen cloudless hours in a grey-blue sky, till the air quivered, the soil was dust and ashes, and green leaves drooped in the glow. Then one night the wind shifted to the north, and brought a drift of smoky cloud shot every half minute with a red underglow ; and for an hour the rain drummed on the roof, the lightning blazing through the flood in pale pink and purple sheets, and the rending crackle of the overhead thunder mingling with the bass boom which shakes the rafters and jars the window-sashes.

In the morning the wind was south, soft and sweet ; all the dull heat was washed out of the air, and the garden was moist and happy, with here and there a breach made by the rush of the rain. I was busy at repairs of these by six o'clock, because I was engaged to spend the better part of the working day down in the village. To-day the Arnington Court of the Loyal Order of Ancient Saxons hold their annual festival—which they honestly call their *Feet*,

unsophisticated by Board School French. As the necessary expenses of the saturnalia cannot be legally borne by the Society's funds, certain of the gentry in the parish are invited to dine with the brethren and, by inferential presentation of a subscription-list, to contribute to the banquet. I received the customary invitation by the hands of the grocer's boy on his round a few days ago, and accepted as a matter of course, with the mixed feeling usual in these cases, the hope that the self-sacrifice involved may in some vague way compensate for the probable failure of any good effect from one's presence.

The Loyal Saxons, following an ancient undeviating procedure, make a full day of their holiday. At nine o'clock there rises above the ordinary village sounds the thump and blare of the brass band, whose music may be traced as it travels here and there about the environs to serenade the seats of the chief subscribers. Distance delivers me from this honour, and takes the worst out of the cacophony, reduced as I hear it to a not altogether unpleasant jingle of cymbals and pulse of the big drum. Towards eleven the National Anthem denotes that the Society prepares to attend Church, where at their request, following tradition, they hear the Rector read service and give them a short address—I have heard several of these—plain,

direct advice as to mutual help, the risks of thrift, and the like, with perhaps one fine thought or touch of pathetic earnestness towards the close. The grave responsibility of properly carrying out this part of the *Feet* prevents, I believe, most of the Brothers from listening to a word. And year by year the Rector commends to them the virtue Sobriety ; now perhaps, after knowledge of many Feasts of Reason, rather hopelessly.

A little before one o'clock I presented myself at the Greyhound, and found some half-dozen fellow-subscribers waiting about the steps till the dinner, half an hour late in right Arnington style, should be put on. There was the Rector, of course, talking to Dr. Culpeper, who is medical officer to the Court ; Chatfield, a young farmer ; Mr. Laban Peskett, the proprietor of "the Shop ;" and Gervase French. The Major rode up presently, and dismounted to the admiration of the street. His hack, his buttonhole rose, his strident hail of greeting and bluff air, we all know and respect. As he entered the portico, he dislodged from the shadow of the doorway a figure I had not noticed before—a small, slight man in a shabby check suit and white wideawake, brown-faced, grey-moustached, melancholy, and by no means so distinguished as the Major. General Aske seems to

have left his distinction behind with his cavalry regiment in Afghanistan; it was once great. Now a colourless, bald little gentleman, he starves in a cottage near the Crossways, is very regular at Church on Sunday mornings, and attempts small parochial employments. As he stands by the red-mottled pillar of painted granite, one can see beneath the woful ragged shirt-cuff the end of a long purple scar on the wrist, which he habitually tries to hide. The Major is sufficiently distinguished without such a decoration.

At length we hear the band coming down Mill Lane, and see the banners debouch into the High Street, above a column of black-coated, billycock-hatted men, solemnly marching in bright blue scarves and tinsel regalia. On all sides streams the whole feminine village, mothers and maids, with a score of perambulators, and the school-children careering in front. Halt is called before the Greyhound, and in a few minutes the long assembly-room behind the inn is full of perspiring brethren, scrambling into their places at the tables, with thunder of bootsoles and a Babel of that sad Cockney-Wealden mixture which is now our main dialect. The subscriber guests take their seats at a high table across the top of the room, supporting the Rector in the Chair. The room is

well-proportioned and airy, built a century ago for very polite assemblies of the County, now sunk to these uses of the Loyal Saxons, concerts of the Arncliffe Choral Society, and party oratory at election times. The tall windows are open and we look out over the inn garden, pleasant greenery and turf under a quick-dropping rain ; here a clump of orange lilies, here an uncared-for hollyhock.

Meanwhile, the tables are set with steaming joints, accompanied with long rolls of Sussex pudding ; the Rector smites the board with his carver, says Grace, and we fall on, in absolute silence. The Court eats hugely, and does fearsome things with its knife. The host's two exuberant daughters, in colossal blond fringes, dirty collars, and white waistcoats, journey round the tables with beer jugs ; they have a mischievous knack of filling up any half-empty glass on the table, so that a man loses reckoning of his capacity, and anticipates the due season. Gradually the tongues loosen, until the room rings with loud talk and rude laughter. At the high table we discuss the promising wheat, the coming price of hay ; or touch on politics of that bland kind which obtains where, as it is in the Weald, all householders are so universally Conservative that there is scarcely a check upon expressing opinions in company.

After four helps or so of fat, underdone meat, we come to currant tarts and jellies, the beer jugs still irrigating the Court. With the cheese and a fresh relay of beer comes a pause, and we can conveniently observe the Court as it sits before us, now fairly loose from any severer reserve. Some sixty or seventy in number, the men are mostly well-to-do, the majority aged something between thirty and forty. There are several lads, and a few grey old fellows. Among them all there is hardly a single farm-labourer ; they are chiefly from the village street and its suburbs, gardeners, grooms, the brewery hands, the shoemaker's men, a one-eyed gamekeeper, a miller's loader, Jenner the higgler, and the contingent from Mr. Blaber's yard, builders' labourers, plasterers, and carpenters. In the main the faces, in long perspective of profiles, are hopelessly heavy and animal in expression ; the aggregate of thick noses, elephantine ears, and shapeless mouths is depressing. The Rector's serene brows and seeing eyes, Gervase French's square bronzed face and straight nose, seem to belong to another race. There are exceptions to the general deformity ; one or two ruddy and curly-haired, a black-eyed gipsyish fellow ; but these only serve to mark the common character.

The rain is over, and the garden looks very cool and

fresh under the grey light, as the long room begins to warm and thicken. The Rector begins the toast-list : we drink "The Queen" somewhat perfunctorily. We are not communist in Arnington, but we really do not trouble our heads very much with affairs beyond a six or seven mile radius from the Greyhound. Then follows the "Bishop, the clergy, and ministers of all denominations," given floridly by the Major, and drunk without enthusiasm. We are somewhat apathetic about the Church, and very decidedly so about the Chapel. The Rector replies, short and dry, with half a dozen ironic hints for those who can see them. The Band is called upon for musical honours, and their repertory being limited, treats us to an encore of "God Save the Queen." We drink "The Army, the Navy, and the Reserve Forces ;" the Major responds, after a hurried and alarmed refusal from the General—"Never did such a thing in my life!" We drink to the Order, the Court, and the Doctor ; the first of these being proposed by Brother Gander, a carpenter, short and grey with prominent eyes, a fairly fluent speaker, and therefore held among his brethren a leader of men. On this occasion, I regret to say, Brother Gander is a little incoherent, and drifts away hazily into larger reviews, only to be brought up by several calls of "no politics" from the back of the

room. He stares about him in an injured manner ; but magnanimously passes over the interruption, thanks the Chairman for proposing his health, and sits down a little suddenly.

When Dr. Culpeper gets up to thank the Court for drinking to him, there is no mistaking the meaning of the applause. The power possible to a country doctor is very great indeed. He has advantages above the ablest and most laborious parson ; he never needs to seek for *his* flock ; the sad confessional behind the wire blind of the surgery, the grim concreteness of the bandage and the knife have a grasp on the poor which no spiritual implements possess. When a practitioner is sympathetic, firm, endlessly painstaking, and plain-spoken, as Dr. Culpeper is with his poor patients, he has the hearts of the villagers as no one else has. To-day he speaks very bluntly to the Court ; tells them to be honest and keep off their sick pay as far as possible, to be clean and sober at all times—"that'll ruin me in a week, and a good many other doctors as well ; but I won't complain if you do ;" most of all, to keep sober to-day ; and sits down amid loud "Ear-rears" and "For he's a jolly good Fellow."

We are not more than halfway through the toasts yet, and at the high table we raise our half-glasses of

Médoc a trifle mechanically at each new call. The health of the Secretary is proposed by Brother Newnham in terms resembling the following, which may be taken as typical of Saxon oratory: "Mr. Cheerman, gin'lmen, and brothers! I've got to propose our worthy Secketary, Brother Backshall." (Ear-rear) "Well! You all knows as I ain't much of a spokesman; but I've been a member of this Court now for five an' twenty years, an' I 'ope as how I allas shall be." (Ear-rear, thumping of glasses on the table, and a voice "Good old Joe!" followed by roars of laughter.) "What I say is, as how Brother Backshall is the right man for the place." (Cheers and rising conversation, a decidedly drunk Brother holding forth in a sleepy drone to nobody in particular.) "Look 'ere! If Brother Boorne wants to open 'is mouth, there's plenty o' room outside!" (Roars of laughter.) "What I say is, give me a Man!" (A sudden silence, produced by this remarkable sentiment. Several members at the bottom of the room file out noisily, after a disagreement with the landlord about beer.) "Well, Brothers all, and worthy Cheerman, I think that's about all I've got to say; and here's to our worthy Secketary!"

In replying, the Secretary produces his balance-sheet, and reads a longish statement of the Society's

moneys. It appears that they have about £1500 invested with a neighbouring Sanitary Authority; that the Court is quite solvent; that the sick pay has been rather high; and that Brother Blaber's and Brother Pink's funerals respectively cost £17 and £14—which strikes one as handsome, to say the least. There is every sign that the funds are managed in an honest and businesslike way; and the real value of the association, which has been a little obscured during the feast, becomes apparent.

The long afternoon drags on. The sun has come out, and shines on the swaying flowers in the garden, where the bandsmen recline beside their nectar. We still have to drink to the Trade, the Visitors, Kindred Societies, the Press, and the Chair. A sleepy atmosphere grows upon us, and presently the Rector, feeling the pulse of things, clubs the outstanding healths together, and dismisses us to the outer air. We all clatter out, a little aggrieved at the curtailment of the regular programme, and I hear a stout brewer beside me say to his mate: "Rector's allas one for cuttin' it short, ain't he?"

In the street we separate, the Brethren to the Mill Meadow, joined by their womankind.

"What are they goin' to do now?" asks the Major.

"Run races, jump in sacks, and so on," the Rector

answers ; "the men for bottles of whisky, the women for pairs of stockings and packets of tea, given by the Trade."

"Wonderful energy, Sir," says the General—"wonderful!"

I turn with the Rector into his garden, a silent paradise after the stuffy ineptitudes of the Greyhound room. "All a puzzle, like most other things," says the Rector—"such a mixture of good management and horrid folly ; so much sense and so much that is utterly beastly ! If one only knew what to take hold of out of it all !"

The band strikes up, far away in the Mill Meadow, and we hear strident laughter and shouts. "Athletics," says the Rector ; "then dancing. It is just five o'clock, and about eleven they will be waking the street with whoops and yells and ends of songs. Ay me !"

Just then Alice came in sight, with a white rabbit tucked under one arm. She gave me rather a constrained welcome, as Barney was restive and had to be securely embraced.

"Uncle Phil said he would rather stay and eat the gooseberries than go to the Saxons. But he had to go, so I chose the best tree, to be ready when he came back. Come on, Uncle Phil. It's over there, by the potting-shed, little red ones. But

there are yellow and green ones that I'm not sure aren't perhaps better, in *some* ways, you know."

"We'll try," says Uncle Phil.

So we went and ate Warringtons and Broom Girls and Roaring Lions under the apple trees, whilst the band blared in the distance, and faint halloos came to us from the festal scene, and Alice talked to us and Barney, better music than many bands, and sweeter sense than most speeches; until Time, in a cap and apron, summoned Miss Alice to please come in directly at once, and left us to debate, in the course of many turns round the garden, the sad labours and still sadder pleasures of John Botting, and whether any one but himself could mend them, if any one would.

22nd.—The slacker farmers are still haymaking, and a week ago harvest began upon the forwarder lands. Among the sheep-pastures and the waste ill-fenced uplands of thin "seeds," the pheasant-coverts and the cabbage-widths, there is still to be found a fair proportion of cornfields, waving crests and ridges of wheat and barley, yellowing or in the full dusty reddish bloom of ripeness, and stubble-slopes set with long perspectives of white oat-shocks; though we all say that it is a mere survival of other years, a make-believe of agriculture. The Atlantic liner, the

grain-elevator, the goods-siding paraphrase for us the appointed weeks of harvest.

In harvest weather I turn my walks often through the cornfields ; the waving ears, the wealthy air of a field in shock, the crisp dry rustle of the straw which even in these dark days seems akin to the crackle of a new Bank-note, the work in the field (not infrequently in small or lodged pieces with the immemorial sickle ; not often hereabouts with that unconscionable self-binder)—all these please me as something passing away which I have lived to see.

Over towards Tyefold more corn is grown than about Arnington ; you can find five or six fields of it together. Yesterday, as I sat behind the fir-clump and looked over the northern hillside, I could tell but two fields showing the ochreous yellow of the ripe ears, amongst the grey-green pastures in all the hundred chessboard squares of the ridge and its dark-green copses—the ridge which within no long memory was cornland from foot to crest. Unless the reaction come soon, and we recoil into an Arcady of reduced circumstances, there will be no corn, no harvest here. The loss will be effectual in several ways ; we shall have to adapt a deal of poetry and apologue, from the Book of Ruth to the Harvest Festival hymns ; we shall

have to give up Time the Reaper—unless we set him to drive a self-binder on the plains of Dakotah. The hitch, already very real, between the classics and the modern understanding, will be widened. The whole loss will be considerable ; for all the old associations of seed-time and harvest are moralist and monitory in a happy way of their own ; and these are qualities not least necessary in times of “the devil’s own team,” grain futures, and the decay of the British farmer. As I half-dozed in the shadow of the firs, watching the barley-ears across the boundary lane shimmering in the still heat, and hearing the click-click-click of the machine as it turned a corner, and the whirl of the pinions as it came down the slope, I dreamed of the years to be, when my plan of museum-counties shall have been discovered and enforced, with Governmental reproductions of the old agricultural labour, historically correct in costume and accessories, for the benefit of those happy souls whom Continuation Schools shall lead to Art or Song ; to give the Board Scholar some marrow to the dry bones of his *L’Allegro* or his *Bucolics*.

As I mused thus, old Tomsett came down the lane with beer for the men at the reaper, and stopped to talk a spell. He agreed that the wheat was looking middlin’ good. But O dear ! it wasn’t worth talking

about now! "They 'spec's the land to grow it all of itself like—never clean it proper nor naun. When I was a boy they'd be movin' a field a week at a time, cleanin' and burnin' an' breakin' it up. An' you never see them turnrice ploughs now—that *was* ploughin'; now they just tetches the top with two 'orses. And these 'ere machines—well, you look at it! When I was a boy, the farmers they *was* farmers then—why, there'd be twenty times as much wheat growed in the perrish as there is now. The farmers they allas comed to Church o' Sunday in white frocks, and tall hats, and leggin's; and after Church they'd all talk in the churchyard, and show their corn an' that; and afterwards they'd have a good booze at the Greyhound. Sims to me as how the farmin' begun to go out just when the machines and all that lot come in; and look at it now! Four acres o' wheat and seven o' oats all they got on the Tanyard, that used to be the best in all Arn'ton."

He sat himself down in the hedge bottom over against me, in the wonted rheumatic attitude, hand on hip; and evidently proposed to let the reapers wait for their bottle.

"How be your taters, Sir?" he asked.

"Middling," I answered; "not much size, but plenty to a root, and no blight yet."

"They've got the blight down in the village," says Tomsett ; "it's pretty bad on the 'lotments."

"It must have been good times before the blight came into the country," I suggest.

"Ah, it was that! Why, they'd grow anyhow! I've knowed people get a crop from plantin' the parin's with an eye or two in 'em. I rec'lect the first time I ever seed the blight, too; up at Hacket Gate on the Forest, it was; there was a man had a nice lot there, called Freeman Sayers—cousin he was to ol' Mis' Sayers as used to keep the Crocodile—and I was goin' by his place one day, jus' about as it might be now, end o' July; an' I says to him, I says, 'Your taters be won'erful early ripe, Mas' Sayers' ('cause the halm was all died down like). 'I don't know what's come to 'em,' he says—and that was the first time I seed the blight. It was the year the railway was opened, and people said as how it was the smoke of the engines blighted the halm. I can't say how that was; but there's never been no taters the same since then. Everythin' keeps on gettin' worse, as you may say. Well, I must be gettin' on!"

So with much trouble he got on to his feet, saluted reverentially with that childlike deference which always produces an uneasy compunction in me, and

balanced between his stick and the beer bottle, crawled slowly down the lane.

I went back to the garden across a grass-plot where the poultry coops are generally set. Here I found Lucy Sayers in trouble at the loss of two more chicks of a dwindling family—trodden flat by the mother-hen, who had broken several of the eggs in sitting, and seemed likely to make an end of the six that were hatched.

“The hens don’t seem to have no sense,” says Lucy, holding up a dismal little corpse by the leg; “people might expect they wouldn’t kill their own chicks. And what with over-eating themselves, and getting wet through, and getting over the fence, and never the sense to get back again—it’s a wonder there’s any eggs at all, let alone pullets.”

Lucy is right, though her strenuous mind puts the ideal higher than most. She racks some two thousand seven hundred eggs a year from a score of birds, at a saving of about one hundred and fifty per cent. on the village shop prices. But the brainless habits of the poultry yard are no doubt a heavy loss to the whole account.

In the garden I noticed that the yellow fungus had spread widely on the hollyhocks, some of the clumps being almost leafless at the base, and the orange

speckle defiling what remained. These Mallows had been seedlings, raised in all the ways of healthiness, but the *puccinia* had cut them down. I think that plagues such as this, the potato blight that came with the railway, the feebleness and helplessness of plants—sunflower and hollyhock and delphinium, that must be made fast with stake and tar-cord, daffodils that cannot stand on their own legs, but lay their heads in the April mire—these, and the imbecility of Lucy's Minorcas, are a sort of retribution upon over-civilisation. We cross-breed and hybridise ; we strain after size and weight, contemning the wholesome mean ; and are punished accordingly in our works. The mischief made by the professional florist among all the blooms he has deigned to "improve ;" by the professional fancier in every kind of domestic animal, is a serious loss to the country. We have domesticated half the natural quick sense out of the animal world we use, and half the sound fibre out of the vegetable. We might perhaps in time learn to refrain the grasping hand, leave some honey in the comb, some gleanings for wild nature put to tasks, and ultimately gain the more ; but we should first have to unlearn full half of our civilisation of man.

In the afternoon there was a symposium under the yew hedge. Margaret Fletcher and Helen Cottingham

came with Mrs. Lydia to paint in the garden ; and when I came home from a visit to the village, I found the girls hard at work among the roses, and the duenna just assuming command of the tea-table. Margaret, with a last frown at her work, slammed her colour-box together, and came towards us ; Helen, head aslant and brush in mouth, stayed to work out the happy moment on a study perhaps as successful as a young lady's is ever likely to be. The garden was at the height of its summer pomp, hiding its bounds with walls of peas and pyramids of convolvulus, rose trellises, towers of hollyhock and banks of phlox ; and by such restriction of view giving scope for all manner of magic vistas and imaginary distances, a condition that has a parallel, perhaps, in some states of the soul. Helen had got into her canvas something of the glow, glitter, and stir of a world of flowers, beneath a square of blue sky as dark as a July afternoon can show.

At tea she told us how she had been to see old Mrs. Heasman, as she wanted to make a study of her thousand wrinkles and tremendous nose. After sufficient explanations, as Helen judged, she had said to the old lady, "Then you are quite sure you don't mind coming and giving me a sitting?" and had received the rather mysterious reply, "Well,

Miss, I won't promise as I'll come myself; but if I can't, I'll be sure to send. You can have as many as you like, and welcome to 'em, I'm sure."

This was a little bewildering, and suggested the black art, in keeping with Mrs. Heasman's witch-face, the black tom-cat on the hearthrug, and an indubitable broomstick behind the door. Next morning appeared the witch's familiar in the form of little Jimmy Batchelor, carrying a basket of eggs: "the settin' of the Plymouth Rocks as you asked for, Miss; an' Granma says as how she'll be willin' to change any as don't hetch."

The moral of this is that we should use the vernacular in dealing with the cottagers. I have seen dire havoc wrought in the garden by my failing to think out the relative values of "edges" and "hedges," in an order for retrenchment given to Bish; and I shall never forget the sardonic twisting of one corner of his mouth that does duty for a smile when, confusing the inter-relation of the aspirate and its negative, I once told him to furnish some pea-rows with twigs at the bottom, so that they could get hold quickly. With a fine sarcasm, he remarked that most people found their peas get hold quick enough of themselves, he reckoned.

Proper names have, of course, their own values ; one soon learns to resolve Strawk and Striggs into their elements of Mr. Awcock and Mr. Higgs. There are stories of one Pocock who denied his identity when addressed by the literary form of his cognomen, but answered to the name of Pawk. The older pronunciation of place-names is going down before the polish of the schools ; Ahson and Heffle and Linvul now get their full value of Alciston and Heathfield and Lindfield from our half-Cockney race : the sonorous long final *-ly* and *-lye*, of so many names, West Hoathly, Arn'ly, Chid'n'ly, are clipped to a mincing equality with Bickley or Brockley, or any other undistinctive appellation. A few ancients of the more obstinate temper retain the old forms, and say "hon-lye" for "only ;" use the plural frequently for the singular (always singing "Rocks of Ages" in Church) ; and sometimes, but rarely, give the old Sussex *d* for *th*. But all that remains is little enough ; and in another generation the last of our Dorisms will have fallen before the all-absorbing Attic of the Old Kent Road.

Here Gervase French came upon us from the field-gate, and took his teacup from Mrs. Lydia. He had come, it appeared, for the purpose of criticising the afternoon's work on the Whatman-block and

the canvas-board ; and Mrs. Lydia and myself were very soon left alone at the tea-table.

We see the three heads in colloquy among the rose-beds ; and once or twice I find my companion smiling a little in a reflective way, busy, I think, with forecasts of Romance. Whatsoever the vision, it was broken in upon by Mrs. Latimer from Blackhatch, a short dark woman of five and forty, moving scented and rustling under a mound of black lace and beads, viewing the world at short range through none too kindly lorgnette. She has been my neighbour for six months, planted for inscrutable reasons in a bald new place on a lonely hill ; her personality being, I should say, one of the differentiae of Earl's Court. I find that self-denial of her pattern is not uncommon among wealthy Londoners ; a country house is a mortification that seems to be attached to incomes of a certain figure.

This afternoon Mrs. Latimer has been doing a round of calls in her carriage. I take her through the garden, with a mild apology to the owner of three hundred feet of glass. She is delighted with the humble scene. "Such a charming, old-fashioned place! Now, of course, at Blackhatch we had to make all the garden out of fields. It is *beginning* to grow up, though," she says ; "but will take some

time." I know Blackhatch well, where a flamboyant mansion, all red gables and chimneys, crowns the hill, a sign to half the county; round it climb the sweeps of bare gravel-drive amid groves of eighteen-inch laurustinus and arbor-vitæ. "Such a delightful old place!" repeats my visitor, her glass aimed momentarily at Helen and Gervase seen in a vista of hollyhocks—as though it had grown on thus since George the First, with never a modern backache nor heartache in the process.

"Now we really beat you in the *view*," she goes on, with a glance over the village and the Downs. "The view from my own room looks over the stables; but from the *drawing-room*, my husband says it only wants a few more really good houses on the best sites, to be really *perfect*. And then, we see the railway! As I sit in the breakfast-room, I can look right up the line, and it really looks as if the train was coming in at the window. So sweet! Now, aren't you often very dull here, with nothing going on?"

I murmur something about internal resources; and Mrs. Latimer flits to the Primrose League, a society whose operations in these regions seem confined to the giving of Penny Readings sandwiching a small political address, and to that mild touting at election times which the Acts allow. I counter with the

remark (which has served before this) that I am by temperament too conservative for these innovations of party strife. Then Mrs. Lydia delivers me from the snare by coming upon us at a corner and carrying off the huntress into the safe and happy common ground of the nursery. I follow the pair, conscious of Jack's croup and Mimi's singing-lessons, till we reach the rose-quarter, and find the girls, driven from their work by the lengthening shadows, scraping palette and putting up traps, while Gervase charges himself with the easel and umbrella and a posy of my finest Teas, which were not to be denied to the desires of Miss Helen, a lady, I think, not so constituted as to be denied in many matters.

When all the company were gone, I took a turn back to the garden; Zero, relieved from social convention, in his wonted place at heel. While the evening mist began to rise, a milk-white lake on the meadows beyond the garden-wall, I thought of Mrs. Latimer's question about loneliness; whether there are not cases when the accident of company does not touch in the least the isolation of the subject; when nothing less than the proper *dimidium sui* avails to fill a treasured solitude.

25th.—Yesterday the Rector surprised me early in the afternoon as I was half asleep over a book, my

only company the young robins and thrushes which haunt the lawn at this season ; Zero away after his own devices, faintly audible in a rabbit-hole two fields off. The parochial reason for the visit was soon despatched. I am a kind of deputy for the Rector as regards my immediate neighbourhood ; partly for handiness and partly because he recognises, as I have found few other clerics to do, those obstacles to intercourse with the flock which the clerical office itself raises, and remembers those sides of the average character which are rarely presented to the parson's view. He has two or three other *chargés d'affaires* in different parts of the parish. Dr. Culpeper is his coadjutor in directions I can only guess at ; of late he has enlisted General Aske under his command ; and it was from a conference with him at the Crossways that he had come on to me at Idlehurst. The General is one of those small, grizzled army men that seem to abound in country places ; for the most part poor, extremely quiet and reserved, high Tory and low Church ; after a year's acquaintance you learn that they led an absurd charge to glory under Nicholson, or saved the guns at Maiwand. General Aske is a good specimen of the breed ; pays his slender bills weekly with great regularity, wears his old clothes and observes old fashions without much concern for

public opinion, and looks somewhat grimly on the amazing bad discipline and talking in the ranks which goes on in social and political affairs. I once dined with him at Major Buck's house : a rather well-known political condottiere was of the company and, perhaps to *choquer* the assembled squirearchy, handled the Crown and Constitution rather lightly. "Sir," says the General, "in Afghanistan I have had to have men *shot* for no more disloyalty than that!" and we returned prudently to the birds and the District Council.

He has been with us long enough now for the story of the long scar on his sword-hand and the bare place on his temple to have reached nearly every one in the parish, and to gain him a peculiar respect. Bodily prowess is still a power with our proletariat, spite of so much compulsory development of their brains. The Rector declares that the mile which he ran against Oxford served him to better purpose in his first curacy than his Tripos. When we meet our little General in his worn grey tweed, sauntering in the lanes and switching the nettles with imaginary true edge of his rattan, we all feel, whether articulately or not, what we owe him ; we can connect more or less clearly the scythes of this and forty other peaceful harvests with the sweep of his sabres under a fiercer

sun. At times he likes to talk of the old days ; lets his wife fetch down his medals, and tells us how he accounted for five native troopers in one charge at Sialkot. And from those ringing days to the Crossways cottage, the yesterday's newspaper, the potato-patch, the campaign as aide to the Rector against old Heasman's tippling and the incurable mendicancy of Widda Blackman ! If ever he asked

“ Otium divos—
Otium bello ”—

in Mutiny times or in the Khyber, perhaps he finds at some hours the answer all too fully given.

I made my usual report to the Rector on old Tomsett ; little to tell of his last summer passing in complete content with the occasional shilling for odd jobs and the assured tea and tobacco. The latter, I regret to say, generally takes the form of plug. A few days ago I found him picking strawberries for Lucy Sayers' preserving-pan ; and as it was a hot day, I told him to help himself to a few now and then. With a placid grin he indicated the bulge in his mahogany cheek, and explained the solace which made him superior to such gauds as Presidents or Ruskins. And I could not quote *ne quid nimis* to him.

The Rector is a bachelor at present, Mrs. Lydia

and Alice paying visits at Lewes ; so I persuaded him to dine with me, and to stay a most unaccustomed couple of hours afterwards. We sat on the lawn in the gathering dusk, scents of honeysuckle on the house and night-blowing stock in the borders coming and going about us on the almost motionless air ; beyond the shadowy space of the garden and the meadow elms, twinkled two or three lights down in the village. Zero discovered us in our deck-chairs, and came to lay his nose on my knee. "One should always have a dog," says the Rector ; "it illustrates our status so well, from the other end. But why don't the fanciers breed dogs that will live to sixty or so, and last a lifetime ? I have given up dogs myself since Agrippa and Bito died. I suppose, with distemper and accidents, one might lose seven or eight terriers from first to last. One has to fancy all the little pack hunting rabbits together through the asphodel. Don't we, Zero ?"

As the light fades, the fir-clump above us deepens in a sort of bloomy green darkness against the colourless air which veils all but one or two large stars. The Rector notices the solemnity of it, saying that he constantly sees in our landscape an intention or expression, a soul, the visible Pan, looking out of the whole. I ask if he has ever found traces among

his people of any pleasure derived purely from the landscape? He doubts; but thinks there is more of what we call "poetry" to be met with in the common life than we generally imagine. Certain people see it, he thinks, as some see humour.

"I met Gascoyne of Ashcombe at the Deanery Chapter on Tuesday," he says; "he is poetical, and the poetry comes to him. He was telling me of a girl in his parish, a servant at one of the farms, who was 'in trouble'—the man, a labourer on the next farm, had gone away from the place. That very wild night this Spring when it was raining in sheets and blowing a bitter gale, she let herself out of the house, and walked for hours all over the farm with the child in her arms. She came back about daybreak; the child was quite dead and cold. She said afterwards that she had heard *him* whistle, as he used to do as a signal when he came to the farm; and she had gone over every lane and field where they used to walk together, always hearing the whistle in front of her. There's dramatic matter in that. Gascoyne had another story from one of his old people; but it doesn't prove anything, because it goes back before the railways. A farmer's son, Mark Pierce, at one of the Down farms behind Firle Beacon, was courting a girl, Mary Cheesman, who lived at another farm a couple of

miles away. A handsome, bullying, travelled stranger, a sailor or smuggler, who called himself Brewster, came on the scene and very soon carried off pretty Mary from her swain. Mark Pierce seems to have been a youth of solid parts ; did nothing rashly, but kept his eyes open and waited. When he found that the interloper meant to take the girl to Brighton, he laid his plans in an original way. There was a path across the Downs to Mary's home ; at one point a sheep-track made a short cut across a bend of the path ; this sheep-track led close to the edge of a very deep chalkpit ; on the land side there were remains of an old flint wall, so that there was only about eighteen inches of practicable path between that and the almost vertical side of the pit. Pierce must have been very much in earnest, as his plan was to make an end of himself and his rival together. He knew that the sailor used the narrow path on his journeys to the farm, and knew when he would cross it, or perhaps waited indefinitely for him. At last one night the two met in the middle of the ledge, and clutched one another. Pierce explained that they were both going to the bottom. A struggle was, of course, the certain way of sending them over ; and as they gripped each other's collars or elbows, it was clearly impossible for one to stay behind. Brewster probably had not the

least intention of dying yet for a girl the more or less, and begged for his life, swearing that he would go down to Newhaven at once, and go to sea in the first ship he could find. No doubt Pierce began to find life somewhat sweeter than he thought ; so he backed Brewster very carefully down the ledge, both holding tight, I imagine, till they reached the end of the wall, and got out on to the open down. I suppose Brewster reflected that so very serious a rival would be a recurring danger if he stayed within reach ; at any rate, he seems to have kept his word and left the neighbourhood. Gascoyne believed that Mary Cheesman married Mark in the end ; he is going to look them up in the Selmer registers when he next goes that way."

"But as to poetry," says the Rector, "how much turns on conditions ! My man Awcock told me this April that Spring had begun when you could set your foot on three daisies at once. It's a poetical touch, but what a difference it would make, even in the almanac, whether the foot were in Awcock's hobnails or in Alice's new party-shoe with the beads on it !"

We sat silent for some time after these histories, in a lulling silence of that positive kind which is one of the best country luxuries—not the mere vacuum of sound, but a most recreative element. From

where I sat I could see the Rector's profile against the dark of the firs, and could see something of the troubled thought which I knew very well had brought him here to-night, that gloom which waits upon strong souls, and rebukes our easy optimisms.

There is no time for confidences like a dark, still summer night—not even the wintry small hours when the last flicker has died from the logs, and the rain beats at the window. But the Rector very rarely indeed opens the penetralia. To-night I merely guess something of causes in his work—some soul in his care snapped from the branch, as I may find a rose-shoot broken after a windy night; or the latter rain denied.

"After all," he was saying, "one must leave people their *posse damnari*, as the sarcastic Schoolman called it. By the way, how little we observe the sarcasm of the Gospels!—the 'just persons that need no repentance,' and 'the poor have the Gospel preached unto them,' and the rest. Milk diet, all our lives! and not very good of its kind. We had a paper on Evolution at our Deanery Meeting: it isn't the change in opinions which interests me, but the quickness of the change. You know I always was an Involutionist. The Chapter think worse of me than their fathers did of the Essays and Reviewers. I

told Miss Gascoyne at the lunch, that I thought the present state of the Science and Faith question something like what a debate would be on the significance of Salisbury spire between an average brick-layer and an average Minor Canon. Miss Gascoyne thinks I ought to be presented for heresy."

This is unwonted discursiveness of the Rector's ; and the night stillness soon returns. It grows late ; all the village windows but one are dark. I see the Rector down to the meadow gate, past the glimmering flowers of the garden fast asleep ; and coming back to the silent house, I see it as it may look when my tenancy is over ; and once more I make an old comparison between the results of his economy and mine.

August 1st.—Often, as to-day, the Autumn seems, to a watchful mind, to come in high summer—a sort of *memento mori* to the full year. Recent showers have cooled and moistened the land, and the early mornings are drenched in dew ; spiders' webs are thick about hedge-sides ; there is a grey haze across the landscape which takes the colour out of the sheaves ranked along the hill-side. There is no chorus of the birds ; only the whispering calls of a family of nuthatches, with the tap-tap of one of them at

work, and the incessant mournful little virelai of the robins, come through the still air. The robins are everywhere, perching suddenly with coquettish friendliness close beside me, fluttering from under my feet in the walks. This morning I was out early, and after an hour busy with next year's cabbages and lettuces, the prospective labour that refines the daily round of gardening, I heard the church clock chime half-past seven, and gave the half-hour before breakfast-time up to idleness. The sun was just beginning to strike warm on the face, and the earthy, grassy smells of the dew to give way to the honey-scents of the flowers. I idly admired the pink and purple contrasts of the season, as characteristic as is the yellow and white note of Spring. Beside me spikes of rosy hollyhock overlooked a clump of deep crimson phlox : a little further were the light pink of the lavatera and the soft pure scarlet of the Brenchley gladiolus, whose rolled-up buds shake themselves out like little red burgees on the signal halliards. These were the main elements of the symphony ; but half-seen touches of yellow in a distant sunflower, of lavender in a Canterbury Bell—unsuspected tones of variously green leaf and pale sky—went to make the full concert : for I think we generally do not make sufficient allowance for the reactions of colour on

colour in the compositions of Nature. The garden has need of all this opulence and depth of tone, for in this high summer display there is no touch of sentiment and imagination, such as the wind-dashed daffodils of March, or the shining wet leaves of April possess. To-day foliage is dry and harsh ; curves are set and stiff in woody fibre ; hopes and fears are mostly done with ; and until Autumn brings in its vein of moralities and sense of farewell, we must take our pleasure in splendour of colour and lusty life—the body, not the soul of the garden.

Thoughts in this manner, latterly mixed with hint of crackling rashers borne across the herb-scents, brought me to eight o'clock ; and I went indoors to find my nephew Bob, arrived yesterday on a short visit during the holidays, deeply engaged with an old cricket-bag I had turned out for his occupation. His delight in the spiffing batting-gloves and a much-pegged Cobbett, tempered by the critical faculty proper to thirteen and a House-Cap, only yielded to the buttered eggs and marmalade. We have a busy morning before us, I tell him ; and he certainly prepares himself against the chances of a late lunch.

For several days past there has been the usual immigration into the village in view of the August Fair. Flocks of lambs and yearling sheep, droves of

heifers and horses, have gone by my gate, to be lodged on any spare grass in the neighbourhood ; and caravans of every sort have assembled and pitched on the Green. To-day was Fair Day, and about ten o'clock Bob and I started to view the sights. As we neared the village street a various uproar grew on our ears, bleat of sheep and scurrying yelp of dogs behind them, lowing of distracted bullocks, and the amazing human noises that are traditional accompaniment to the herding of beasts. Once through the village, blocked with cattle and endless rows of farmers' traps on their shafts, dangerous with the wild career of rough-riders, we find the Green in a state very unlike the wonted solitude where geese cackle and small boys play cricket. Under the dull equal light of a low grey sky its thirteen acres are dense with men and beasts. A large part of the upper end is laid out in wattle pens for the lambs which properly constitute the Fair. Between the pens run lanes along and across, crowded with all the sheep interest in Sussex, farmers and dealers of every degree. Below the pens stand the cattle, small bullocks and heifers rounded up in rings that constantly stampede and are re-formed with frantic din ; further still are the horses, tied by the head in long lines, or galloped with amazing exhibitions of

horsemanship up and down the grass. All along the western edge of the Green runs the Pleasure Fair, a wide street lined with a hundred vans, with shows and stalls and gipsy tents, and capacious booths for beer.

At the edge of the Green we met with Mrs. Lydia, Margaret Fletcher, Alice and a tribe of her friends. To them I handed over Bob ; and I saw the youngsters plunge at the double into that enchanted ground where lines of cocoanut shies, attended by mellifluous and urbane gentlemen in picturesque costumes, masked a dim magnificent background of swings, roundabouts, and a menagerie with real live lions. I turned back to the sheep-pens and went the round, with a look now and then at the fat-backed, clean-woolled lambs packed between the wattles, but oftener at the crowd which moves about the lanes or stands bargaining at the corners. In the pens shepherds are busy counting the lambs, picking out strays, or marking the sold lots ; shepherds from all parts of the county, oldish, worthy-looking men for the most part, weather-burnt and rusty-bearded, many wearing the slate-coloured frock, and carrying the ancient green umbrella with whalebone ribs. The shining crooks are stuck in the ground at the pen-side, and under them are chained the dogs, resting, nose on

paws, after the morning's scrimmaging and endlessly clever and zealous work. There are a few indeterminate mongrels among them, but the chief part are a distinct and very fine race, big, rough-haired, pepper-and-salt coloured animals with a white foot or two and a tangle of hair over their honest eyes. Round the pens lounge the odd-job men, who live their lives at such meetings as this—nomads hardly less animal-looking than the beasts they follow, wild old fellows with long grey locks; gigantic, shambling hulks; blear-eyed toothless dwarfs—figures of a Rembrandt etching. Than the breeders and dealers who lean over the wattles nothing less picturesque could be found on the Green. There is one old man in gills and a blue-spotted neckerchief, wearing a low-crowned silk hat—the old John Bull attire of the fat years gone by; but he only serves to set off the extreme ugliness of the current bucolic style. Most of the men here are big and stout; they are mainly a strident, aggressive people, heavy-handed and hard-faced; their countenances, too commonly, are gross and vacant, too often shaded by long use of what we call “tipping it up.” There are a few younger men in the crowd in smart riding-breeches, fancy waistcoats, and knowing bowlers; but the majority are monotonous in tailcoats of greyish hue and ample

cut, square-topped felt hats, and leather leggings. All about the pens business goes on with the customary tortuous approaches and leisurely stages of advance. A hundred lambs change hands at thirty shillings a head, a score of tegs at forty-two. The County Bank's representative sits in a brougham on the fringe of the Green all the morning, and through the window pass the handfuls of cheques and notes of a depressed agricultural interest. The farmers commiserate one another's losses with uproarious shouts of laughter; they adjourn frequently to the booths which the Crown and the Crocodile, and twenty other of the neighbouring inns, pitch very profitably on Fair Day. Once more the reflective observer ruminates upon the mystery of a Ruined Class.

Turning at the upper limit of the sheep-fair, and looking back over the long ascent, alive with confused motion and noise—here the admirable stock, here the gross, hearty men, the apparent signs of abundance and easy circumstances,—one wonders (forgetting perhaps for the moment the corn-interest) what the good years can have had to show more than this?

I walk round the cattle ground; beasts are selling fairly; and, if the trade in horses is disproportionate to the noise and energy of the dealers, to the shouts of "hi—hi—hi!" and rattling of pink calico flags,

there is business doing at good prices. The half-gipsy dealers of our own country and the visitors from Cork are not doing ill : fifty pounds for a young Irish horse, much too soft for our up-and-down roads, seems sufficient. Still, there are worse animals than the rough-coated mount of the blue-chinned, bullet-headed "gippo," whose long grey Newmarket flies behind him, and whose seat is worth seeing. He is a type of the horse-interest as definitely as the lantern-jawed, sandy-bearded Saxon is of the race that deals with the "Ship."

I went back to look for Bob in the Pleasure Fair, and found him, at the far end of the half-crown I had commissioned him to spend, shooting at eggshells poised on a small fountain ; while Alice and the rest of the party, laden with cocoanuts and jumbles and fairing toys, respectfully looked on. I was seized straightway ; and although the small people had been all round the shows twice, from the Fat Lady to the Theatre Royal (alternately rendering an abridged *Faust* and the *Green Bushes*), was made to go round with them again. At ordinary times I should loathe the tawdry pandemonium, and hold sound opinions about the duty of local bodies towards the physical and spiritual nastiness of a Yahoo camp once a year in our midst ; but through the hold of a small hand,

and incantation of children's eager babble, one is conjured back somewhere near, at least, to the magic country of old, and it becomes a thing possible that there were years when the gilded cars, the roaring steam orchestras, the painted terrors of the forest, were glory and loveliness, a morning's Paradise and dreams for a week.

When we tore ourselves away, we all went to lunch at the Rectory ; and most of the afternoon the elders sat by the garden-door steps, watching by glimpses and fits the noble game of "I-spy" as played by Alice and Bob, General Aske's boy Peter, Kitty Culpeper, and others of their fellowship. As the shrill tumult flashed about the garden (a careless wilderness given up to romps like these, and perhaps the better for it than my serene groves), one perceived through hedge-gaps and orchard vistas that Alice and Bob—she quick-footed and lithe beyond the other girls, learned in every burrow and short cut in the ground ; the boy a head above the rest, bold to dash through quickset or jump the cabbage rows—were always together on the heights of chance, hunter or huntress, captured or derided from the hard-won "home."

Then all at once they changed the game to "French and English ;" and for a few moments Alice,

a dishevelled prisoner, was interned beside us under the Gloire-de-Dijon of the porch. I tell her I am afraid they never have such good games in my garden.

"No," says Alice, combing the hair out of her eyes to watch the game; "but I think we *could*. You see, we know all the hides there are here; but in your garden it would take—oh, *years* to find them all out. And the gardener dug up all the nut trees where we used to play at jungles, and he planted a lot of silly old rhubarb there instead—and what games can you play in rhubarb? We *did* try to do the jungle, but it was no good."

"I *thought* the rhubarb was always rather undersized," says the Rector to Mrs. Lydia.

"It got trodden down so," Alice explains. "Kitty and Peter both wanted to be the tiger, and when they both tried to hide in the same place, they squashed it. I do wish we hadn't found out all the hides quite so soon, though."

A desperate charge of Bob's through the enemy here rescues the captive; and the two rush away to restore the fight. The Rector moralises a little on Alice's text about the hiding-places; he thinks we may presently have to regulate exploration and scientific research, to leave humanity sufficient exercise

ground. There are people who are always grubbing up Enchanted Forests to plant rhubarb upon. Mrs. Lydia declares that none of my nectarines are so good as the mere chance of finding a stray Victoria deep in the leaves, an oversight of the pickers. And I recall the longing felt in childish walks to be among the dim blue hills far, far away, the magic distance that fled before me, and still flies, year by year, further from one's feet.

At last the light began to fade, and Bob and I took our road home. I asked him if he didn't think the girls rather jolly *for* girls? Well, yes, some of them. Alice was rather jolly, I should think? Yes, very.

"They want us to ask them all to tea on Thursday," I remarked; "but of course we can't, because we are going to fish at the mill that day."

"Of course," says Bob; without enthusiasm, I think.

Halfway through supper Bob suggests, "I say, Uncle, how would it be if we fished first, and had them up to tea afterwards?"

I find he is not quite prepared to put off the fishing till next week; so we arrange to divide the day between the mill and the garden. When Bob says good night, he wants to know, in an offhand manner,

if Alice will be here next summer? I said, most likely.

"And the year after that?" I replied, perhaps; but some year soon she would be going out again to her people in India.

He inquires no further, but with a reminder about moss for the worms for bait, retires, assuredly to dream of blue eyes and yellow hair, of a large red and green float and shiny hooks. Perhaps he finds the Indian Civil, that vague doom which has overshadowed his young horizon, the lever used to persuade to superfluously good reports for the half, to-night grown something of a promise, a light upon still greater dreams. Whatsoever the visions may be, I think not a few of us would change with Bob when he wakes to-morrow and the delightful world takes shape for him again, like clear-coming images of a glorious dissolving-view.

10th.—This morning I went over to Tisfield for some small necessities which are above the range of Arnington custom, but may be found in the Tisfield "Emporium." The day was cloudy, and the northerly breeze rustled the yellow-green wheat-ears above the dusty hedges—perfect weather for walking. Of late the temperature has made exercise a burden; the comfortable condition lies within a very small range

of the mercury. If any modern should follow that delightful precisian Aquinas, who fixed the universal age of the saints in glory at thirty-three, and should apply the thermometer to the empyrean, he might be conjectured to determine the figure at 65° Fahrenheit. A little more, a little less, and how self-conscious do we become !

Halfway on my road, a cart pulled up beside me, and I was hailed by old Avery, with an offer of a lift into the town. The springs of the conveyance were perfunctory things, and space was cramped by a well-grown calf under a net behind the seat ; but the offer was not to be declined. I got up at once ; the mare Polly was persuaded by much jerking of the reins to start ; and we jogged on towards Tisfield market. I find that Avery has had trouble lately ; he has lost two cows through milk fever, and his wife has been laid up for a fortnight with "the kidney ;" but he possesses that very real form of piety, as I think it, which shows itself under misfortune by an enlarged sense of the humour of things.

"I wasn't able to go to market last week," he tells me ; "had the landlord's agent down to look round : come all the way from London, and of course he couldn't know it was market day ; could he ? A rare lot of money they loses, doing things that way ! My

landlord, well, I don't see him more'n once or twice a year, when they shoots the big wood and the plantations ; mos' generally they has lunch at my place, but of course you can't do no business then. It's allas the agent, when you want anything done ; and they sends down a young chap in new trousers and brown leather boots, to walk through my yard to look at the pig-pound that wants new-healin'. Brown ? Yes, they was brown enough when we come out ! O' course you can't expect Mr. Newcome, as made his money in hay-rated waters, to know anything about farmin' ; but that agent's young man as comes down from the office in town, he'll lose 'em a tidy few hundreds a year, I reckon. I says to him, ' Mr. Weeks,' I says, ' it 'ud pay you to get a man to tell you the difference between a two-shear teg and a Old Gate-post mangel. I give you my word,' I says, ' I'm doing the land as it ought to be done ; but for ought you knows I might be skinnin' the farm down to the gravel.' "

" Of course," I say, " a landowner ought to understand the land ; and then it would pay him to look after the farms himself."

" I didn't never hear of nobody as wouldn't say so, that had tried it," is Avery's somewhat Sibylline response, with a fine Sussex collocation of negatives.

"There's another thing they does," he begins again, as Polly checks at the hill up to Dudman's Gate, and the reins can mind themselves as she snorts her way up the long elm-shadowed rise ; "about lowering rents. They'll hardly ever take anything off for an old tenant ; but when they've got a farm on their hands, they'll cut it down for a new tenant as they don't know much about. Last year there was Clark, what was over at Framepost, near Rispham village, and Joe Tester at Camomile Cross, this side o' Blackhatch in our perrish ; they'd both on 'em been at their landlords to take something off the rent, and they wouldn't. So they settled it between themselves. The farms was about the same size, and not much to choose between them ; Joe had got mostly a bargetty soil, but very good water—and there was a beautiful bit of garden at Framepost. So they both gives notice for Michaelmas, and just changes over, and both the landlords puts the rent down twenty or twenty-five pounds. That's not what I calls sense ; not in no fashion."

As we reach the crossways at the top of the hill, we fall in with other marketers, driving beasts on foot, or carting pigs and calves. I observe that our calf attracts notice, and say so to Avery. He allows that it's a "middlin' good calf ;" he don't hold

with rubbish. Terrible poor truck you often see at the market. Meat? He doesn't call it meat. "They tell me," he goes on, "that the gentry in Arn'ton, they grumbles a good bit about their beef-steaks and that. You ask the butchers where all the old cows go to! My missus being laid up, we was short of our butter last week, and I bought some in the village for ourselves, so's to send away the full weight. 'Butter?' my missus says when she looks at it; 'I reckon I'll churn next week, kidney or no kidney.' There's still plenty of good butter to be got, if you pay for it. But look at cheese now—that 'Merican stuff! and ham: we makes a few the old way, that'll keep nigh on two years, and we smokes 'em in the chimney where there's nought but oakwood burnt; but there's not many cares for them now, 'cept 'tis you and Muster Lewknor. 'Mild-cured' they sells in the shops—stuff as won't keep a week."

It is not the first time that I and Avery have indulged a common regret about our food-supply. With the disappearance of so many of the real country products, the country loses one of its principal charms in the breakfast-table. Eggs are too often only gathered at uncertain intervals, and a casual beating up of hedge-bottoms and the odd

corners that hens affect brings to table things of all degrees of suspicion and dread certainty. Shop-jams are a poor make-believe after the fine aromas, the gold and ruby syrups, the all but natural fruits of the right home-made conserves. And the worst of it is, as Avery says, that a great many people don't see much difference.

"Half the people in Arn'ton village thinks as how they've only just learnt what's good to eat, and that we old 'uns used to live on tater-peelings. When I was a boy we used to live in a bit of a wood where there was a brook runnin' by, and a lot of wet meadas, and sallys growin' about. My father he was won'erful clever with traps, and he'd a gun—the keepers didn't say much generally—and most days we'd have a hare (we didn't make much account of rabbits, they was so common), or a pheasant as he'd pick up a day or two after a shoot ; and we'd wild-duck sometimes ; and I got trout out of the brook sometimes up to a pound and a half, and eels ; and we'd plenty of honey, and allas eggs ; and apples most years round to Easter ; and then the nuts and the mushrooms. There's plenty of people nowadays as don't live better than that."

Not bad faring, and all fresh and fine ; and I fancy that most of the outlying cottages could still

furnish their larders almost as well. The trout grow scarcer ; but they are still to be had, stout pounders, here and there by the alder roots and the sluice-posts in the slow yellow brooks, but two yards across, and too thick to see a foot into.

Just before we gained Tisfield street, we met the Vicar, a youngish man newly come to the living. Avery knows Tisfield affairs pretty well, and doesn't think Mr. Hawkins gets on very particular with the people. They look back to the late Vicar, a man whom the new generation called unclerical, but who was a real countryman in the country, knew the ways and thoughts of his flock, and was well versed in several branches of learning ignored by the rural parson in these times of deepened spirituality. But it was this man's predecessor, the Reverend John Scrase, who was Avery's ideal parish priest ; he was a famous vet., and had a power with pigs that overcame the customary belief that pig-maladies are incurable, and that when a pig "fails" he should be made butcher's meat at once. Avery cannot see that this gift was any detriment to the practice of spiritual medicine. He remembers that when his old master and the sow were both considered to be *in extremis*, Parson Scrase was fetched to both, over the heads of Lunsford the farrier and

the incumbent of the parish. At the master's desire the sow was attended to first. Avery helped the parson to bleed her, and then took his place with the rest of the household at the death-bed ministrations in the best bedroom. I judge that the office was said with a power and spirituality which Avery has never forgotten. He is quite certain that his master went away easier because the Parson told him, "Reuben, put that sow off your mind. She'll be quite right again in two days." "And then," says Avery, "he waited a bit, like as if he was thinking, rubbing the lancet on his coat-sleeve ; and then he began the prayers. Now him," he continues, indicating the present Vicar with a backward jerk of his head, "what does he know beyond his Latin and Greek? Muster Scrase knew all that, and Hebrew too, I've heard say ; and he was a *man* besides. If a man's got the real thing in him, it isn't much for him to understand a bit of farming, or about animals and that. Now most people would ha' cut that sow acrost the ear with a knife, and not used the lancet ; but he *knew* what she wanted."

I put it to Avery that perhaps the modern incumbent has not so much time for extraneous labours.

"I dessay they took things easier when I was a

boy ; you see they'd only have the Sunday service, and not allas that. When I was at Bessingworth, my master was churchwarden. There wasn't no regular parson then—sometimes we'd have one, and sometimes another. I've known my master and the old perrish-clerk set off on horseback early on a Sunday morning to find some one to take the prayers. The one we had mostly came over from Lewes ; he used to drive in his own trap, and when he got to the toll-gate that used to stand near the Church, he'd allas have a row with the gatekeeper, 'cause he wanted to go through free, being on duty like ; but the keeper he wouldn't have it, 'cause he wasn't the reg'lar parson of the place. I rec'lec' one Sunday when the school-children was a-coming by, they was at it ; and the parson he off with his coat and threw it in the trap, and the gatekeeper was ready for a bit of fun, and they had a pretty tidy fight out there in the middle of the road. People wasn't near so strict as they be now. I rec'lec' old Muster Best, at what used to be the Hall—what they calls Arn'ton Park now. Ah ! there was alterations when *he* died ! They turned the deer out of the park ; one old 'un bolted right through the village and got into the pond. The old gen'lman kept a pack of hounds, four or five couple—not safe to go near the house it wasn't—and a huntsman. After he

was dead, the heir come and turned Madam out of the house ; she was niece to Comber the clocksmith in Tisfield, and she'd been there some time afore the old lady died. She thought she would ha' had the house left her, and she wouldn't go ; but they carried her out in a chair, and put her down, chair and all, in the road outside the gates. There was goings on then, and no mistake ! Ridin' all day and drinkin' all night, and cards, and shootin' at the family portraits with their pistols, and all manner of wickedness. They said the old gen'lman was allas sober on Bench-days for nigh on twenty years ; and he generally come to Church in his old yella carriage, and the ringers used to keep on till they see him come in. They was reg'lar besieged once by the bailiffs ; shut up in the house for a week, and pullin' up their victuals through a winda in a basket of a night. We heard the old gen'lman firin' his guns out of the upstairs' windas to frighten 'em ; and if he'd hit one on 'em he wouldn't have cared. After a bit, the heir began to cut the timber, and in a year or two he sold the whole place ; and that was the end of that lot. It seems to me like as if the old fam'lies got wore out, same as chicken and garden-stuff, if you goes on allas with the same old stock."

So Avery moralises the fall of the long line of the

Bests, the poison of whose decay yet works among us.
The Averys,

“*Humiles, vulgi pars ultima nostri,*”

still thrive in all corners of the county ; and the old man's sons, whom he left cutting the oats at home to-day, bid fair to carry on their branch of the tribe still sound and vigorous.

By this we were come into the market, and I descended amid the hubbub of men and beasts, the distraught cattle and huddling sheep, the pigs who never in direst misfortune quite lose their sense of humour, and whose most agonising yells seem to contain a note of the burlesque. I passed the Bank and the attorney's office, with their knots of clients hanging about the doors, and addressed myself to the task of arguing with the young gentlemen of the Emporium as to what my wishes were. The swinish chorus from the market-pens shrieked momentarily behind me, a jocose undertone becoming decidedly more perceptible as the new arrivals settled into their lodgings, and forgot the ash-plants and tail-pullings of their conductors. Something might be said, I think, for their rationale. Perhaps the sense of humour may ultimately prove a better defence against our more trivial and diurnal

misfortunes than the consolations of philosophy ; better as slipping rather than parrying the blow, and as leaving the more solid guards for those weightier assaults which will not fail at their own season to require all the defence we know.

18th.—Yesterday I had need to go to the county town ; so leaving Bob in charge of Lucy and Bish, with orders to the latter to fetch up the old pony from the meadow and divert the young gentleman with him if matters became too adventurous, I walked the three miles to Tisfield, the congeries of stucco villas and builders' lots, nursery grounds and brick yards fenced with corrugated iron and barbed wire, which has sprung up, *magalia quondam*, during the last thirty years round about a dreary wooden pile of buildings perched high on a red clay embankment—Tisfield Junction, the railway station for this part of the world. Waiting for the nine o'clock train, I find half Arnington on the platform. We are all travellers now : it is only the old folk who have never been five miles from home ; even vegetative natures like Bish have been to Brighton, under strong necessity, three or four times in a lifetime. There is no doubt that fixity contributes to peace. I found old Mrs. Roser not long ago placidly making tea, quite untroubled by the fact that the French, as she had just heard

Jenny read in the newspaper, had landed at Gravesend. I don't know what West African port the old ears had translated so, but it was all perfectly immaterial to her. There is loss as well as gain in excursions and market tickets, and the complete educational system of the Brighton Front for nineteen-pence.

In the train I found myself in company with Mr. Biles, insurance agent and dealer in sewing-machines, a political, social, and (to use the copious affixes affected by his race) educationalist leader in Arnington. Arnington opinion, in the stratum which Mr. Biles touches, is not sufficiently in earnest about anything to be led at all coherently just yet; and Mr. Biles' demagoguery, conducted chiefly by means of contributions of the adjectival Baboo kind to the local press, is not, I understand, considered dangerous by the most Conservative stockbrokers in the neighbourhood. The nucleus of vital Radicalism in our village lies with a half-dozen of working-men, fair workmen, soberer than the common, irreligious, good family-men, who do a little reading, are civil, and (let me as an ingrained Tory say it) very superior to the ordinary labourer of the place. They are actively ignorant, bitterly prejudiced, stupendously incapable of clear views or any approach to argument; but their opinions are a live force working against the

mixed landed and moneyed interest at present dominant in the county. The attitude of the local Conservative managers to men of this class appears to me to be the *prius dementat* order ; and when the perdition arrives, it will be none the better for having Mr. Biles and his kind riding the whirlwind and directing the storm they did not raise. When our Parish Council was first elected, the Radical groundswell of the place swept over us all. Those were wild times. The Major's coachman beat his master by three places. Old Tomsett was nearly elected. Bish, to his agony and terror, found himself incredibly nominated. The Doctor got in *as* the doctor. The Rector stood out and watched the fray, telling us it was all make-believe. And Mr. Biles was easily head of the poll. Then we waited to see how the new broom, with Biles at the handle as Chairman, supported by the coachman, the publican, the brewer's-cad, the schoolmaster, and the two small farmers, would deal with our destinies. After this interval we are beginning to fancy that nothing particular is going to happen ; that there are higher powers still left, that the new Council was only a toy pistol for the Arcadian Demos to play with. So far, after punctual meetings, heightened oratorical style of Mr. Biles, a few vulgar "breezes" (one satisfactorily concluded with fists on

an adjournment to the lane behind the School House), the Council has achieved absolutely nothing. The impression that there is nothing for it to do seems to be growing. We surmise that this was perhaps intended from the first ; and I think that for some little time we have been breathing freely again.

At the next station to Tisfield there got into our compartment three County Councillors going to Lewes for a Council meeting, well-set-up men in tweeds and straw hats, with a pleasant country look about them. Two are retired Army men, the other a landowner. General Rich, who represents Arnington with the half-dozen adjacent parishes, a grey-moustached cavalryman, with a fine earnest face and masterful eyes, nods to Mr. Biles, who replies with jerky nervousness. The fame of the demagogue has not reached the other councillors, who represent the Seckington and Ashcombe divisions. The landowner is lean, grey-whiskered, with something of a Royal Society look through his pince-nez ; the other officer is a big handsome man, burned to leather by Indian sun, grave and quiet, with all the discipline of the world about him. The three talk in easy half-slang (which must be scandal to Mr. Biles, whose lightest moments are Macaulayan), looking over the agenda-papers of their meeting. We hear of such

odds and ends as the extinction of steam roundabouts, tail-lights for timber waggon, and the needs of roads and drains. Our County Council is perhaps a little ambitious, is still making the clean sweeps of the new broom : but at least it has work to do ; it does not adjourn for fisticuffs : the Radical tongue-itch has not affected it at present. As we came into Lewes, I thought that when Biles and his friends, verbose, raw, undrilled in the great world, displace at the County Council our General and his comrades, we shall be in the last days. Meanwhile, the present dispensation of Government has elements of an assuring kind.

Up one of the break-neck lanes from the station to the Castle Hill, and do my business with my attorney in a still little office shut off by its wire blind from the changeful world ; in its dusty light, its brown book-shelves and slow-ticking clock, year to year the same. Then I rambled about the town, from the top of the hill down the prone street to the river-level ; turning into the lanes that run southward—Watergate, Castlegate, St. Andrews—and show remainders of old timbering and gable-ends in odd perspectives on the steep incline.

At last I came through the Cliffe to that steep down by the great chalkpits, and climbed the face of it by the rough stairs of the sheep-tracks scored

through the thin grass into the chalk. The whole slope blooms thick with eye-bright, mauve scabious, and wild parsley: overhead, as I toiled up, the edge of the down cut the zenith, a most magnificent contrast of light yellow, the flush of the tanned and seeded grass, against pure azure, an opening in the rolling clouds, crossed with a few fine threads of white cirrus. I sat for an hour on the top in the still, hot afternoon air, looking down upon those dismal flats beneath the town, slashed and fouled by acres of railway siding; upon the curves of the Ouse; upon the town piled high about the Castle, seen through a haze of gold-coloured smoke. The Downs surround the whole, showing here and there the least hint of mountain character in their forms; between their scarped ends lies the blue airy distance of the Weald. The cope of soft grey bellying clouds shifts slowly from the south-west. The great expanse of sky seen from this height gives full sense of the motion of the whole heaven, a hemisphere a-sail, with infinite changes within itself, perspective openings-out, occultations and adumbrations. Beyond Mount Harry the fading streak of a shower trails across Chailey Common; southwards by Newhaven the sun is out upon a bar of numberless small, rounded

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clouds, a pale golden horizon. The business of the atmosphere is visibly going on in that manner of serene purpose and unity which makes the operations of Nature so good a refreshing after human modes.

Looking down on the town again, I find the compact little whole, a busy hive, bounded concisely enough this way by trees and meadows, to be not altogether out of tune with the quiet heaven. The barges are coming up slowly with the tide ; with them comes the smell of the sea and knots of drifting seaweed : the men at the puntpoles wear oilskins and sou'westers. Country waggons wind through the Cliffe streets ; Down folk and Weald folk are marketing, banking, seeing their lawyers, up and down the Hill. In the County Hall my three Councillors and their fellows are devising liberal things for the commonweal. A fairly consentaneous chorus of easy-going chimes gives the hour, with no sense of wishing to hurry any one. The place is alive with businesses done with very little noise, smoke, or stench. It seems to fulfil all the needs of a town ; and one regrets that some sort of centralisation of noxious trades and decentralisation of ordinary human aggregations should not at least preserve

to us the good parts of country towns like this—a city not too dense for the swallows to build at the eaves of the street, for lilies to look over the fences in the steep closes, for breaths of the Down grass to come across the inmost lanes. Let us have Brighton (“a stenchy place,” in Lucy Sayers’ compendious description after her one visit) to absorb riches and civic zeal, notables, criminals, and the strange woman; let us keep a country town or two as preserves for clean atmospheres of body and soul, for the almost lost secret of sitting still.

The warm air, the silence, or sounds that seem a part of silence, the least rustle of breeze in the dead grass, the *wiz-wiz-wiz* of the grasshoppers, have a drowsy spell. I find myself tangled in half-dreams of a devolution by which, when national amenity shall have become mentionable besides personal pence, London shall attract to herself all the small vice, as she does already most of the great, from the country, all the thrusters after gain, the vulgar, heavy-fingered intellects, the Progressive spouters, the Bileses, the speculating brigandage, and shall give us back from the foggy world of clubs and cab-ranks the geniuses, the poets and painters, all

the nice and witty and pretty people, to make towns such as this, conserved and purified, into countryside Athens ; to form distinct schools of letters and art, individual growths, not that universal Cockney mind, smoke-ingrained, stage-ridden, convention-throttled, which now masquerades under the forms of every clime and dialect within reach of a tourist-ticket.

Towards which state of things may County Councillors, not the least my three friends (whom I meet on my way back through the town, *functi officio*, smoking well-deserved Regalias), help to bring us. Of late they have shown signs of appreciating the worth of natural beauty ; a trifle, indeed, in face of the coming Light Railways and the prevailing estimate of protests against a three per cent. Vandalism as maudlin affectation ; but a beginning that may grow. A little more education, and the state of the Kaffir market, or the registrations, or the birds, may still leave our C.C.'s leisure to be conservative in a sense posterity will conspire to praise. Yet a little more, and Mr. Biles the educationalist may read Plato, abjure Macaulay, and ultimately throw over his distorted dream of Progress, four-fifths Bumble and the rest Sansculotte, for service of his generation holding

fast that which is good, in the necessary rural ways of Arnington.

23rd.—Bob has left me, and I miss his cheerful criticism of life ; though, to tell truth, I found the boy at times father to the man in a somewhat discomposing manner. We fished the brook together, and I found that my conceptions of bottom-tackle were superannuated, on the authority of Vines major. When the Jollands' Corner eleven came over to play the Arnington Juniors, Bob and I opened the innings. It was a treat to see the boy's school-discipline come out in contrast to the lumbering clumsiness and slinking tricks of the village lads ; if anything could make one young again, it would be that shrill call, "Come on, Uncle!" to my rusty snick behind the wicket. But the one-eyed umpire, who counted the over by depositing a halfpenny for each ball behind the middle stump ; the old tailor, who kept wicket in an embroidered waistcoat and braces ; the floury miller, who varied erratic round-arm bowling with absolute straight sneaks—all these I learned to appraise by the standard of the House Eleven and Vines major, and to condemn in obedience to a call to higher things. We do try to copy the ways of the County. We place our fields for the miller's round-arms just as Richardson's

fields are placed ; we stand twenty yards out at point to the batting of the grocer's young men ; we take our guard and look round the field precisely as you see them do at Lord's ; but Bob is at most merely tolerant. "I say, Uncle," he remarked as we came home from the match, "I think if you hadn't tried to cut that ball, it would have missed, you know. Vines major never tries to cut unless——" And so forth, and so forth, to the furbishing of the virtue Humility.

The match was matter for conversation for a week, and Bob's criticisms led me to reflect now and then upon the present state of our country cricket. The science shown on the village pitches is in truth poor stuff from which to raise a champion County. Any lad seems to be able to perspire into some tolerable sort of bowling ; not one in fifty ever learns the merest rudiments of hand and foot with the bat. The bowling is more and more after one pattern—energetic in action, very commendably straight, and as fast as the expositor can make it. "They don't much like my bowling, up on the Green," said my garden-boy the other day, with a pleasant smile, going on to tell with modest pride how a certain brick-layer whom he had hit had not been able to go to

work for two days. And perhaps the terrorising plan is really the easiest way into the wicket, while the current theories of defence obtain. The batsman dodges towards leg from the projectile and tries a speculative horizontal swipe, with fairly constant results.

In our neighbourhood there is a middle-aged land-owner who once kept wicket for the Gentlemen, and a hard-hitting Blue ; both great supporters of the game. Sir James keeps a groundman and an eleven of his own, and has matches in his park ; the other is not happier at Lord's, I think, than when hitting the village bowlers across the Common into the pond. But neither touches the root of the matter. If they and their likes would take the trouble to give the rustic batsmen some occasional coaching at the nets, and would persuade the bowlers of other qualities than speed, I think the native talent available for the County would be notably increased. In another way the real country cricket suffers. The Arnington first eleven sometimes contains but three or four Arnington men. Mr. Denison the Blue will be playing, and Captain Dean of Ockington, and Quartus Nye, a clever mercenary who is known on most of the grounds in these regions, and perhaps four or

five Brighton players, nominal members of the Arnington club, who come out for a day in the country and the good of their averages. The standard of play is raised, of course ; but the system must injure local cricket ; and surely the village grounds ought to be the nurseries of county fame. The Vicar of Tyefold, a neighbouring parish, does something in the right direction with his Institute, but lacks the authority of accomplishment. When I have seen him on warm Wednesday afternoons wiping his glasses after being bowled by three successive balls, or sending down his highly popular lobs, I can only be sorry for a lost opportunity. He tells me his matches are sometimes rather melancholy work. The boys are apt to prolong the interval promenading with cigarettes, or even visiting the Green Man ; they are on occasion mutinous ; and are apt to regard the outing more than the game.

While Bob was with us, a match was arranged between the Arnington second eleven and Buckfield Down, a hamlet a few miles to the north ; and Bob and I were included in the Arnington team. When I last played at Buckfield, a good many years ago, cricket there had a touch of originality. Two brothers, whose daylight crafts of fettling and ratcatching

thinly veiled the professional poacher, were the mainstay of the Club. Both were fine players of the dashing sort. Jethro, the elder, had some rudiments of civility ; Fred (commonly anagrammatised into Derf or Derfy) was an unmitigated ruffian, who played tricks in the field like a vicious monkey, and rarely got through a match without fighting a backer of the opposing side. Both the brothers were constantly in trouble : more than once Petty Sessions have lost Buckfield the game. Once when Jethro was bowling to me in the annual match at Arnington, I turned after playing the ball, and found the bowler had vanished from the crease and was running hard for the nearest wood, pursued by a man who had emerged suddenly from the pavilion with a writ. And it was Jethro and Fred who once came over to the Arnington cricket dinner, and had to be taken home in a conveyance. The charge for this convenience appeared in the Club's accounts at the General Meeting, and with a friendly understanding that it should not form a precedent, was duly passed. Nowadays Jethro is respected and a little feared as an umpire ; Frederick is definitely on the parish ; and there is no longer need to include a boxer in an eleven visiting Buckfield.

On the morning of the match-day we were picked up at the Tanyard corner by the Arnington drag, well loaded with the Second Eleven and their bags. At Blackhatch we took up old Tom Fillery, a huge, withered old fellow with a shrunken arm, and quite the unfairest umpire it has been my fortune to play against. I think we all felt a secret relief to find such an ally with us, or at least to know he was not to be on the other side. A little further on we hailed a young farmer on the top of a rick, to come and fill the place of Bill Wickens, who had informed the distracted Secretary at starting-time "as how he didn't seem not to care to come, like." The farmer comes on board, dusting the hayseed out of his breeches; and in another twenty minutes we reach the Buckfield ground and find the Buckfield eleven zealously practising. The ground is a patch of peaty turf, cleared out of the edge of the heathy moorland rising to the Forest Ridge. The pitch has a quaint indiarubbery feeling to the tread, the outfield is hillocky and adorned with gorse bushes; there is a tent, and half a dozen forms from the neighbouring National Schoolroom. Our horses are turned out to graze; we lose the toss and take the field, not a little relieved, most of us, that we can rub the

anxious edge off the day before we are called upon to bat.

The game is not eventful : the wickets fall at fairly regular intervals for about four runs apiece. Bob brings off a couple of good catches, and is out leg-before for two in our first innings. About three o'clock, after a wasp-haunted lunch in the flapping tent, a lunch at which we consume enough aërated waters to inflate All England, Arnington is going in for the second time, to get thirty-five runs to win the match. The Buckfield bowling on its native heath is really murderous, and six wickets fall for eighteen runs in half an hour. Then Bob goes in and saves the game. We sit about on the hard forms, the afternoon sun strong on our shoulder-blades, and realise the beauty of the game. There is by this time quite a little fringe of spectators round the field : the Vicar comes by and stops to watch the play ; the school-children troop out and sprawl in the grass close to long-on's legs ; a pair of dashing bays champ and paw at the roadside, while the garden-party hats and parasols behind them perceptibly stimulate the fielders. Bob plays forward again and again, ducks to the bumping horrors, swipes the leg balls, and runs like a hare ; but no one stays with him ; and it comes to the last

wicket and seven runs still to be got. Then arrives to Sam Veness, the last man in, that lucky hour which awaits the feeblest bat, once perhaps in a season. While Bob plays beautifully, Sam makes wonderful strokes from the handle or tip of his bat, puts up easy catches which no one can reach, and hits the only really good-length ball of the match into the road for five. He is too much astonished at himself to think about running, and the strain upon Bob must be serious while he exhorts and implores and advises for five or six overs, until a generous overthrow gives us the match, and we thump the benches lustily to relieve our feelings. One over more, and Bob, falling by

"A mortal stroke
What time the foeman's line is broke,"

puts up one in the slips, and trots into the tent the hero of the day.

The horses are caught, and away we go for home, swaying and jolting through the honeysuckle lanes, with song and chorus and compliments to Bob; and to him the negative compliment of wholesomer talk than is customary in these outings, and perhaps of the shortened stoppage at the Compasses on the way.

We are put down at the Tanyard, and tug the cricket-bag up the hill together, pleasantly tired, and with a wholesome regard for supper. We have had a happy day in the sunshine, and I hope done something to remember, and to set our backs up for work again next half.

Bob departed, a double silence falls on the following Sunday. The day is still a day of rest in Arnington; I think the land may be said to enjoy her Sabbaths. Excepting certain of the "big-house" people, Londoners in villegiatura, who by carrying over inane junketings to Sunday afternoons throw away a cheap zest to their organised amusements, in this corner of the world we really use once a week that admirable refection of quietude. The morning was grey and still, a weather-Sabbath in itself. As my custom is at times, I had sent the household to church, and stayed at home myself to watch the small needs of the curtilage. All being in train in the stable and the yard, I idled in the garden, merely enjoying the borders, at truce with chickweed and shell-sneg; careless, for the time, of rotation of crops and successions. The year's labours are nearly done. As I pass, the onion crop is sunning under old cucumber-lights, ready to be housed; the potatoes are raised,

all save a late plot ; all next year's crops that start on this side of New Year are sown and planted. If there is a Sabbath in the gardener's calendar, I enjoy it now.

An hour such as this repays a world of painful cares. The gardener knows consolations which must fail in many a loftier "mystery." There is a time, I think, to the literary and artistic workman when horrid doubts grow, that the critics were perhaps right after all ; and when the large editions or the great canvas shrink ghastly in some keener atmosphere. But no breath of conscience can touch the gardener's results ; those silvery lettuces cold in morning dew, those great sunburnt Beurrés, those first Ashleaves of the year, are facts immutable by the course of Time. A novel may turn to outmoded chatter, a play become a shuddering memory ; but who challenges the Frontignacs or the Moor Parks that were good ten years ago ? I would have all men gardeners ; then when Treaties are torn up and Parties wrecked, Philosophies superseded and Art damned, there would remain a solid ground of satisfaction to each one, cauliflowers that cannot be impeached, pippins whose aroma endures. In the borders the double dahlias, those Philistines of the

garden, sanctified by childish recollections, shone richly among the autumnal aspects—tiger-lilies uncurling the volutes of their petals before they fall, the rampant twine of the convolvulus carrying its purple trumpets unfaded until noon. The Autumn crocus—Hesper of the year, as his yellow brother of March is Phosphor—stands in leafless tufts of clear pink-purple, one of the most satisfying pure colours that we know.

Sitting under the holly hedge, I looked over all the valley to the Downs ; the chimneys of the village, the grey spire against the dark mass of its neighbour yews—a very portrait of peace. There was no sound but the whistle of birds about the garden, and the mellow, mournful changes of the bells across the south-west wind—bells which clash merrily enough about the village street, but at this distance always have a penetrating melancholy. They cease ; then, scarcely heard, the quick shrill ting-tang calls in the belated worshippers ; and the moment after, Morning Prayer has begun. Sitting still in perfect idleness, I find a pleasure in merely leaving the mind open to the least things that move about me : to note the wagtail making his short quick runs on the lawn ; the young swallows trying their wings in circles from

the great apple-tree, while the old birds incessantly feed them, a clamorous, fluttering brood ; the nut-hatch hammering his wedged filbert with intense application of science and strength ; the humble-bee opening the trap-doors of the snapdragons, visible at his work through the translucent tube. By silence and keeping still one may come something closer to the little lives. Most creeping things regard one at all times merely as a fortuitous mountain range, to be scuttled over ; but birds will come close to any one who will preserve the bearing of a field scarecrow for a reasonable time ; a week's persistence would give results probably surprising to the learned Societies.

The landscape was everywhere tuned down to the dull, heavy green of late Summer ; one oak showed a rusty bronze ; here and there in the apple-trees a bright yellow leaf foretold the fall. There were two ashes in the middle distance, to which the eye returned once and again with vague pleasure in their mere green tuftiness—pleasure reducible to no known rules of the Beautiful, and without any touch of association. From these trees the eye was drawn off by a flash of yellow on the slope of one of the Major's fields, a wild autumn garden of ragwort,

docks, scabious, seeded thistles—lovely but desolate. I never carry my feud with the weeds beyond my own hedges; once over the bounds, all the growths which within the sacred ground cause an almost instinctive action of the trenchant spud, are safe; I recognise their nobility, their admirable lustiness of growth and procreation. For all that, this field, with its dead wiry grass full of hard-heads and five-foot thistles, is a blot on the pastoral landscape.

The grey cloud slowly draws off, leaving a shining noon of tempered warmth and soft light. Spaces of oblivion, perhaps, shorten the time; for I hear Lucy Sayers astir in the house before I had thought of dinner. I imagine that she has hurried up the hill from Church, her mind with the pots and the oven, which indeed I fear may have even come across the Psalms or the sermon. Lucy lives wholly in her work; for sure she will die in it. Two summers ago she was very ill; and one afternoon it came to be understood in the close dark room (it was haytime and cloudless weather) that Lucy would die. She has no kin to trouble about; but she went over all her world of kitchen-things—told us where such a thing lay—how there was one custard-cup broken, and that the black

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pepper was just done. She gave instructions, with beseeching earnestness, as for orphans in an unfriendly world, about the linen then out in the top meadow, and the morning's milk in the pancheons, and the smearing of the skep when the bees were taken. If she had a thought for her kind, that she had served so unfailingly for fifty years, it was about little Jenny the kitchen-maid, who had lately shown tendencies to crockery-breaking, and had been late down twice in a month. Then she went to sleep, and two days after rose at her immitigable five in the morning, and went about her matters as though nothing had come between. Once or twice afterwards she referred to the horror of that week's holiday. "I felt," she told me, "just like a kitchen towel that had missed going to the wash. We've all got to die some day ; but if I could, I'd die all of a sudden, when I'd got all my work done and tidied up of a Saturday night." There may be worse ends than that, most faithful Lucy.

My book has fallen unawares upon the grass. I get up and stretch my legs round the garden. In the warm south corner the peaches are ripening fast. As I look at them, a swallow sweeps over the wall, and the tortoiseshell butterfly skips into the air and

settles down again on the orange and silver lichens, flirting its wings and sitting close to the warm brick. Through a mile of gold-coloured air, steamed up from copse and meadow and yard, redolent of grass and mould, of smoke, hayricks, woodland tangle, comes the stroke of one o'clock, no more stringent monition than the thin shadow of the dial half hidden in the peach leaves on the gable end. I take the forwardest peach and throw the stone over the wall—no garden-party peaches approach the Noblesse from one's own south corner—and move towards the house, bowing to Pomona as I pass beneath the branches bent with heavy-headed Louises, and pleasantly conscious of a right salad and a certain Sauterne to come. At the steps Zero uncoils and greets me with prodigious yawn and elaborate stretching of fore and hind legs in due order, and with a subdued tail-wagging which approves both myself and the coming dinner-time. It is a day when all seems well. Here the garden prosperously meets September. Down in the village the Sunday dinners are being turned out, generous as fits the good times: no one is out of work; there is hardly any sickness in the houses. Down in the lane I can see Liza Packham and her young man, rather late for the Packham dinner-hour, but by no means

hurrying up. The whiff of old Tomsett's pipe hangs by the field-path where he passed a moment ago, creeping in vacant enjoyment about the farm. It is an hour when the mind launches away into boundless seas, forecasting, remembering; but always under the pervading intense happiness, irrational, serene, that sometimes runs through a pleasant dream. Such ease of heart will be balanced all too soon by another hour, when the travelling clouds seem to touch the garden walls and the daylong rain sweeps across the desolate frosted plots; when the village, a nest of sordid roofs seen between the storms, is a hold of coarse vice and worthless lives, the men out of work, typhoid fever in Mill Lane, and the propaganda of "decline" at the full. Then the mind ranges over all manner of miserable things it has no concern with—

"'An my sins

Come drizzlin' on my conscience sharp ez pins ;"

the mass of London crime and wretchedness, forty miles away, lies heavy on the wilful Arcadian; heavy lies that future to which Mr. Biles' educationalism leads the herd; the unchecked defilement of the old beautiful country; the passing away of the

old race ; that vast hypocrisy which proposes to Conserve.

An idle afternoon in most perfect weather ; the air no mere average gaseous compound, but vivifying element, rich and keen, a delight to breathe and move in. I read ; made a progress round the farm, noting once more the immense deep-set humour of pig-nature, the wise conservatism of the cows that follow their wonted path round to the yard gate, never cutting off the corner, for serene reasons of their own. Towards evening a great web of pale golden cirrus cloud drew slowly over the western sky, and about sundown the bells began to ring again to Church. Leaving Lucy to promenade in the garden with Bish and his wife, who had walked across from Dogkennel, I set off to the village for evening service. The bells were being falled as I reached the churchyard gate ; and before I was settled in my accustomed place by the middle pillar, the organ began, drowning the faint clink of the ting-tang. Mrs. Lydia always plays for some little time before the service, music which seems to tune all the air to the coming solemnity. Now we are all in, four hundred or so of familiar faces, mostly of the street dwellers, the tradespeople, the shop-boys, the nursemaids and "generals ;" there

is hardly one of the "great-house" folk, not many of the farm people and outliers. Near to where I sit are three or four very old men, two of them in the white frocks of years gone by. They will remember the time when there was no organ, but a gallery with singers, a clarionet, and an "octave," and the school-children to help out the anthems ; when school was held in the church ; when all was done on ampler, easier lines.

The Rector's voice, neither dry nor dramatic, of a quality which seems to lose itself in the sense it conveys, begins the service as the last beat of the bourdon dies away. I have an inherent trick of the mind in standing back at odd times, to see things as it were at a little distance ; and just now I find myself wondering how the immemorial words come to old Tomsett, sitting for sixty years by the same pillar in the aisle ; and whether they ever penetrate the feathered and ribboned head of Maëry Bish. I hear the clear monotone and the answering roll of the response, the rustle and shuffle of the people that stand up for the Psalms, while I think of the generations who were here on such nights as this in three centuries past—the folk whose names are yellow in the Register Book, whose heirs erected the range of

marbles along the wall before me—the pillared and fastigiated Latin of the Baronet of 1728, the mean little tablet that commemorates the last of his race, dead in 1810.

We sing the Psalms ; our choir of boys and men, thanks to Mrs. Lydia's chastening, is much better than most of the choirs in our country ; but we are a hopelessly unmusical race, and our facility in rolling our R's on a note nearly a semitone flat is apparently ingrained. I think it is possible that the old order of church singers and musicians, which was largely hereditary and was a very distinct "mystery" in Sussex, may have absorbed almost all the country talent, and left a void when the Tractarian brooms began to sweep the western galleries. At present the people join almost inaudibly in the chants—here a fancy tenor, there a feminine trill. In the better-known hymn tunes they make themselves heard, tugging at the air, and seesawing fervidly with the choir-boys. Of late years the Rector has relaxed somewhat a high standard in the choice of the hymns—as he has let go several other matters, to grasp weightier, perhaps. We now rhyme "woes" and "clo'es ;" we describe our religious symptoms with delighted analysis and many accidentals ; we mingle

reminiscences of the Missa and the camp-meeting ; we do much, I am afraid, to show by doggerel verse and worthless settings, that anything is good enough for Church.

By sermon-time the church is growing dark ; the windows have turned from pale aquamarine to deep azure ; the doors are wide to the evening air. From where I sit I can see the shadowy loom of the Downs, the black gloom that hangs under the yew-boughs, where the bats circle to and fro along the flagged path and wheel up against the green sky. We are all very quiet, for we never tire of listening to the Rector bringing forth things new and old from his treasure ; things old as our catechisms, new with sudden life of meanings and force undivined. To-night he is most simple and direct. There is not the exquisite fitness of words, the eloquence growing out of the subject, not clothing it, which we often hear. Half conscious, in the twilight, of the man leaning over his desk between the wavering candles, of the intensely mental face, grown sadder and older of late, we listen to the great effort to set the unseen before slow hearts, to lead his people beyond the little hedge of their lives to thoughts of the Real beyond. Beyond to-morrow with its pleasant return

of busy life ; beyond the village ways within the old circle of the hills, work, wage-nights, holidays, weddings, burials ; past all this a thousand ages dead, a whisper of memory, the soul holds on its way, never to lose itself or to wear out the mark of each least thought and deed in the earthly years so far behind.

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The church is very still. All, save some few like old Tomsett, whose head has dropped upon his hands crossed over his stick, are held by the preacher. Maëry Bish forgets to giggle and adjust her hairpins ; the grocer's lad for the time forgets Maëry ; the boys by the west door, who usually begin to feel for their pipes during the last hymn, are for the moment in deep waters.

To-morrow, we know, the village round will go its way. Maëry will be back at her sluttish flirtations, and Henery's malevolent little eyes look through the smoke of his clay pipe on a hated world ; Mr. Eliab Blaber will pursue that curious commercial path, serpentine between much fundamental integrity and time-honoured trade fictions ; Botting and Marchant and all their kind will renew their walk of beer-alleviated toil. Through the preacher's spell comes

the recollection of week-day realities ; comes to the preacher himself, I think, closing sadly, a shade perfunctorily perhaps, to-night. But for the hour our ears are open ; the years of sober, consistent goodness speak in the clear fine sentences to the flock that listens, at least. Something, one assures one's self, must accrue in a lifetime from such nights as these ; some touches of light, reaching on into the sordid week, add themselves for ultimate unguessed good.

Dismissed into the starry dusk, we stand in shadowy knots about the churchyard, or move in twos and threes up the pavement and the street. Pipes glow amongst drifts of smoke ; the Arnington dialect is loud and free. As I pass the entry, there comes a foul word out of the shadow, a girl's shrill retort, and a burst of that coarse laughter, tuneless and detestable, which I know too well. The street clears by degrees, perceptible currents setting towards the Greyhound and the Crocodile. I am not sorry to lose the last of the company at the Tanyard corner and to set my face to where Capella glints among the dark masses of my firs, that grove which shelters in busiest times a Sabbath once acquiesced in, now beginning to disclose its proper charm.

Happy he whose dreams of conquered worlds come true, at forty-five or so, in a garden plot, some roods of subject earth under a sky that is only peace.

25th.—The Rectory garden, long suffering under the Rector's theories of horticulture, and Alice and her friends' practice of romps, is saved from entire desolation by Mrs. Lydia's repairs, and by the loan of Bish for a day, which I make from time to time in the summer, as a reinforcement to the Rectory factotum's somewhat ineffectual labours. Mrs. Lydia finds time to spare from her house, and the Clubs, and the District, to make the annual pink pipings and geranium cuttings, and to trim and weed in the long summer evenings. For Bish, whom the Fates in youth by his parents kept from Sunday School for fear he should learn bad language, and the rest of whose life in the green solitude of Dogkennel and my quiet parterre has been after that beginning—for Bish those days down in the village are landmarks. I think he knows a fearful joy to feel in the secure covert of the Rectory walks the stress of Arnington life surge about him; to hear the tradesmen's carts, the bell for morning service, the stir of feet and voices, to see the postman three several

times in the day come down the churchyard path. But no excitement in the least affects his work; if he were set to sweep the Bank crossing to-morrow, he would do his slow, equable, tireless day's labour. His touch was evident when I entered the drive at the Rectory yesterday: there was an unwonted well-kept look about the gravel and the edges quite beyond the reach of Awcock's rake and shears. In any state, the garden is a pleasant place. The modest white-fronted parsonage stands half hidden between two beeches, round which an irregular lawn slopes and winds, hedged by high shrubberies and careless flower-borders. The churchyard wall makes the boundary on one side—grey stone shagged with huge-stemmed ivy; over the wall peer the graveyard grasses, with one or two of the old wooden monuments; through the outmost feathering branches of the great yew trees and between their trunks, black as night, the chancel-wall of the church shows its silver-green lichens. At every corner of the garden the spire looks down over the trees, iron-grey in storm, to-day glistening white against the pale blue sky.

As I came up the drive I thought that the sense of peace which always dwells there had never before seemed so deep: the still cool air of the morning, the

faint shadows thrown by the half-veiled sun, the murmur of the village beyond the bounds, all went to produce the feeling of an aspersion of calm. Half hidden by a group of hollyhocks, Alice read, elbow-propped on the garden-seat by the tulip tree ; a little flock of fantail pigeons on the grass before her. Through the open windows came Mrs. Lydia's music, filling all the garden with the gaiety of the Arabesque. The sundial at the cross paths, old and green, with the Rector's motto new cut on its mossy plate—*Donec aspires dies et inclinentur umbræ*—told eleven o'clock with almost invisible shadow. The hour chimed from the church ; and as I found myself a little before the appointed time, unwilling to break the spell either of the fairy-tale or the Schumann, I turned into the box-bordered labyrinth of the kitchen garden, a herbary which usually suffices to put me in conceit with my own. The impression of prevailing restfulness of a slightly autumnal quality was still in my thoughts, and led to a consideration of some of the Rector's methods. The Rector has a theory that the Christian qualities are best disseminated in a parish when they noticeably prevail in the parsonage ; that the priest's household where unpaid bills, scandal, pride, or strife

of tongues are not found, has a quite peculiar influence upon the people. So far as I have observed, this theory is not very common in clerical society ; from peppery Diocesans to giddy Deacons, the clergy rely, as it appears to me, too much upon precept. But the Rector of Arnington is singular, as is well understood in the Deanery by this time.

To the Rectory bank of graces (so to call it) Mrs. Lydia's chief contribution is this impregnable peace : it is almost solely hers ; or what part of it may now be the Rector's, assuredly began from her. His own peace, if one may judge, is of the kind which has to be fought for and held by the sword ; a sort which can have little pacific effect upon others. Be this as it may, the repose that never leaves the Rectory precincts has a positive influence in the life of the parish ; and I know how often I have come to be charmed out of a restless temper in its magic air. Many other virtues are there that blow upon the village from that household, like Plato's " breeze bringing health from out of good neighbourhoods ;" but for its own wealth and its peculiar use in present needs, that gift of stillness is above all the rest.

As I was counting the six or seven greengages on the eastern wall of the fruit quarter, I saw the Rector coming up the "twitten" with Dr. Culpeper and General Aske. I met them on the lawn, and we held our conference under the beeches—mostly upon parochial polity of a rather minute nature, such as arranging a common line of action in the matter of the new lamps which the Progressives want to put up in Deadman's Lane, and of the mending of the Mill Lane footpath; but with more human interest when the Doctor told the Rector about some of his cases. Old Mrs. Hillman is dying at last, through days and weeks of delirium; under the shadow of death all the ordinary virtues of a worthy old age seem to fall from her. Her daughter and granddaughter are probably injured for life by the burden of nursing her. It is a grim ending; but one much commoner than the moralists conceive. And sudden death at eighteen has delivered Sarah Bennett from lengthened sickness, by hæmorrhage in the early stages of "decline." There are cases still to be watched by the two physicians: when the Doctor goes to finish his interrupted round, the Rector goes with him, silent, his brows bent. He has ceased long ago to hold the common belief in a necessary inverse ratio between

bodily and spiritual health ; he knows the sapping, numbing power that sickness can have ; he has seen, I have heard him say, the wreck of the body take down the soul with it. The General and I were asked to lunch ; and while the Rector was away we sat with the ladies by the study window ; Mrs. Lydia with her work, Alice on the grass at her feet, catechised in her Hindustani by the old Indian. The two specialists were soon engaged upon Meerut and Allahabad, and Father's orderlies, and the Rains ; whilst we other two talked our common English matters until the Rector came back, and I took a couple of turns with him along the walk by the churchyard wall. The sombre mood had passed, and he was ready with that eye-laughter which is so quick and can be so deep. He had been in London for a few days recently, and had come back with relief to the levels of the Sussex mind ; that supposed superior sharpness of town-intellect lies only in one particular direction. The Londoner, he thinks, has all his strength in the front line : one can never tell what reserves the countryman may not deploy in his slow way. " I like that phrase of ' Silly Sussex,' " the Rector says, " and the way we take it to ourselves ; it is better, after all, than ' Canny owd Cummerlan,' " or calling ourselves

'free and enlightened citizens' or 'heirs to all the ages;' and of course we say it ought to be 'Seely Sussex,' or even 'Selig;' but that won't do. You'll have heard them say, 'It's may'ap in Sussex,' and about the Sussex rule never to shut a gate behind you. After all, we are not so bad: we have something of the New England quality, besides 'guessing' and 'reckoning' and 'hurrying-up.' I had a good deal of talk with an American I met at the hotel: he had the acute rural mind—Hosea Biglow's pattern—very refreshing. Don't you love a good American? Talking to one always seems to me like seeing one's own side-face, as you do sometimes with two looking-glasses. I went to the Abbey with him; heard Horner preach—a very popular course—crowd of carriages: his mind always seems to me a little *costive*, somehow. It was on the Future State; you know the form: exordium to show we are providentially kept in the dark about the Hereafter—then the light modestly turned up. When we came out my American guessed some people could tell us the pattern of the carpet in the Bottomless Pit; and then guessed I called that irreverent. I said the word was very loosely used at present. I had in mind the Tisfield curate who asked me to subscribe to a more reverent harmonium for

his iron church : I replied that the unsound state of our heating apparatus took all I had to spare. But suppose Sussex as silly as you like ; the country *wants* a large preserve of fallow brains ; you can't manure the intellect for close-cropping. Isn't it Renan who attributes so much to solid Breton stupidity in his ancestors ? But our virgin soil is going fast. My Lords keep the drill at work ; you know the kind of seed ; 'urit avenæ,' eh ?" The lunch-bell, echoing the half-past chime, called us into the house, where we found an invasion of Alice's friends, come for a sort of farewell festivity. Bob is gone already ; Alice goes away next week ; and all the company will soon be scattered. As the afternoon was cool, and the want of Bob's leadership was evidently felt, the elders were impressed into the after-lunch game of hide-and-seek, with a handsome implied compliment in Kitty Culpeper's preliminary charge to us all to keep to *terra firma*—"And I say, you know, we won't have *any climbing trees!*" But even on the earth the wild career was too much for some of us, who found breath to suggest a mushroom-gathering. So we got baskets, and all trooped across the meadows behind the church ; and while we elders did our share of picking (for what more engrossing

sport is there than finding the buttons and broadbrims in the lush pasture ?), the children of the lesser growth strayed away in the fields beneath, with shouts of discovery, with races and a squabble or two, perhaps, for the prizes.

From the top of the first meadow there is a favourite view of mine—a vista between two dark green oaks in the neighbouring chase, a view which one can shut out with one hand at arm's length. First comes a hillside of sloping meadows and hedges, rising to a cluster of red roofs among stripes of corn-land dotted with sheaves ; next, woodland, ridge over ridge ; beyond a dip of the woods a streak of light that means the broad levels of the Weald ; last, a blue hill that meets the sky twenty miles away. This always seems to me an epitome of the true England—not dockyard forests, nor groves of chimneys, nor roaring streets ; this is the heart still, I tell myself. It is for this, at bottom, that the Aldershot guns are at work to-day, shaking the still air with a dull abrupt thunder ; for this that Bob and Peter are so soon to be sent across the world. As we rest by the field-gate, the General listens to the sound of the firing, thinking perhaps of the different intonation which shell gives to the guns—the guns to which

his boy Peter is destined. The Rector gives Peter a little coaching : he is a fine upstanding lad, but slow with his algebra.

"Do you think he gets on, Lewknor?" asks the General, a little anxiously: the shadow of the coming "shots" and failures for Woolwich is already upon him. "My father only gave me my uniform and his blessing," he says; "and as to exams., well, I think I had to sign my name to something. Now, what with the crammers and the exams., I tell you, sir, I really dread the next few years more than I can say."

"When he gets through," I say, "I suppose you would wish him to go to India?"

"Oh, of course," answers the soldier.

"And," suggests the Rector, with perhaps an obscure hint of consolation for coming failure, "if there should be trouble on the frontier, he might be sent up to the front, and perhaps be hit in his first action."

"He'll never get the chance!" sighs the General, mournfully, with that barrier of Trigonometry before his eyes, to withhold his boy from the paternal career and his rightful chance of a bullet.

Still the guns rumbled intermittently, and we

watched the landscape and the children making their good-bye holiday beneath us. I thought of the longer good-byes to be made in four or five summers' time, when Bob and Peter and Alice shall go to the ends of the earth; but shall keep, I trust, the memory of these hills and woods to say to them when they need it—"England;" and perhaps to steer them back in due time to the green meadows, to gather mushrooms staidly, while the next children shout and race below.

Teatime closed the long afternoon, and brought back the foragers with their pink-and-silver spoils, no swarthy-gilled ancients amongst that plenty. Back to the garden again, with tea under the beeches, and romps not perceptibly affected by any thought that they are the last. Then good-byes—some for weeks and weeks—but all full of cheerful noise.

I find myself the last to go, receiving from Alice orders as to the tastes of a dormouse which I am to take care of for her while she and Aunt Lyddy and Uncle Phil are away.

"But suppose I go away too?"

"*You?*" says Alice, with fine scorn, putting me in my place and showing serene appreciation of the

constitution of things : " You ? You never go away ! "

And perhaps that is one reason why I always seem to be saying Good-bye.

POSTSCRIPT.

MY DEAR PATERSON

September 10th.—The year is going out peacefully : no gales wreck the fading garden, no frost cuts down the lingering beauty of the borders. Yesterday was all pale sunlight; almost shadowless ; wherein Bish, working among the turnips, was but a flat shade among airy spaces of colour, a ghostly gardener in a silent world. To-day the wind blusters from the south; the sky is heavy with grey cloud; overhead the gathering swallows wheel and balance. To-morrow may be high summer again, with the sun of July breaking out of the morning mists. But whatsoever the day may be, summer is gone past recall—

“ Scende la vita, ch’ alfin cade.”

We begin to prepare for hybernation ; summer friends are leaving us. Gervase French is in the North ; Margaret Fletcher has gone back to her folk, and taken Alice with her. Mrs. Kitty meditates Cromwell Road. Very soon we shall be settled down to the bare woods and miry ways, the deeper quiet of winter, the long looking forward to that February day which shall mark again the opening year.

In the dead time, and in the failing season before it, we have pleasures enough of our own ; and I could tell you histories even in the three-days' drowning rain and under the hedge-deep drifts. But my little diurnal of the year ends rightly here ; it has been a history of a summer, and closes with its matter. The swallows are already going ; with their departure my mind turns (I confess) to the palms and temples of the south. I feel that much is to be said in favour of migratory habits, since in your case (perhaps also in mine) the further land ever grows the dearer. Without yielding my old position in our question of the homing and the straying natures, I will say at least that some day I may with the

swallows break from the little green horizon and try
the world where

“hills enow, and far-resounding seas,
Pour out their shades and deeps”—

and so come to learn the true worth of those country
ways—if country there be left from London's
tentacles—which I have tried in some sort to set
before you.

ENVOY.

SMILING you blame the idle mood which clings
Still to one corner of the marvellous earth,
And holds a rood of English garden worth
The harvest of your far-held wanderings.
And while we talk, o'erhead the swallow sings
High in the blue, or, stooping, trills her mirth
About the lowly eaves that saw her birth,
Along the lawns where first she felt her wings.
With me she loves the silent isle of flowers
Between the meadows and the chimneys grey,
Loves the close paths and solitary bowers,
The narrow precinct and the trim array ;
Yet some still morning, after certain hours,
Over the marvellous earth she sweeps away.

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